

THE EARLY METHODIST LAY PREACHERS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION
TO THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY REVIVAL IN ENGLAND

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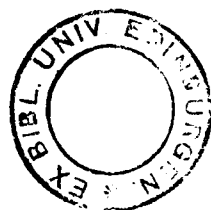


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FOREWORD

The subject of this study was first called to my attention by a statement of John S. Simon's in his John Wesley And The Methodist Societies. He was describing the beginning of Methodism in the Midlands and especially the outstanding work of John Nelson, when he said:

. . . we are impressed by a fact which has not been sufficiently emphasized by some who have described the course of the great Revival. While doing justice to the importance of Wesley's direct work in the evangelization of the country they have failed to give sufficient value to his indirect influence. No one can read such books as The Lives Of The Early Methodist Preachers . . . without learning that in many parts of the country the original Societies were gathered and kept together by laymen. . . . It is possible by diligent search to recover some of their names, but an impenetrable veil covers most of them. They share the common fate of many of the pioneers in great religious revivals; but a day will come when the veil shall be lifted and we shall know those who, in rough places, prepared the way of the Lord and made His paths straight.¹

This sent me immediately to those almost forgotten volumes, The Lives Of Early Methodist Preachers. Before I had finished reading the first tome, the present study began taking shape in my mind. I soon discovered Simon was right when he said that an impenetrable veil covers most of that large body of laymen who acted as class leaders, band leaders, and exhorters

¹ John S. Simon, John Wesley And The Methodist Societies, pp. 70-71.

in those first Methodist Societies. Even from over the lay preachers, the veil is lifted only here and there to reveal the men and their labors. But these glimpses stir the imagination and send one diligently searching for more information.

When John Wesley first began to use lay preachers in the work of the revival, he made no distinctions among them. They were simply known as Wesley's "helpers" or "assistants." As the work grew, however, Wesley accepted helpers who wanted to continue at their trades and give only a part of their time to preaching. These worked in a limited area and became known as "Local" preachers. Others, who gave their full time to the work and travelled up and down the country assisting Wesley in the supervision and control of the Methodist Societies and the local leadership, became known as "travelling preachers," "itinerants," "helpers," or "assistants." As Methodism expanded further, Wesley appointed in each circuit one of the "helpers" as a superintendent preacher and designated him an "Assistant." In the Conference of 1749 this distinction was formally recognized, and two orders of travelling preachers were established--"Helpers" and "Assistants." There were then three main divisions in the Methodist leadership: (1) the Wesleys and the small band of sympathetic clergymen; (2) the itinerant lay preachers, i.e., "Helpers" and "Assistants;" (3) and the local lay leaders. The principal subject of this study is that body of itinerant preachers who

assisted Wesley.

In the early days of Methodism, Wesley used the terms Assistant and Helper interchangeably and often referred to the whole body of travelling preachers as Assistants or as Helpers. Actually, there was not a great distinction to be made between them then--they were selected and admitted into Conference in the same manner and were governed by the same rules and regulations. The "Assistants" were really "Helpers" who were given a few added responsibilities. Since I am largely concerned with the early years before the division was too pronounced, I have not stressed the distinction; and it should be said at the outset that I have used the two terms interchangeably according to John Wesley's original usage. In order to avoid any confusion, however, I have used a small "h" and "a" when using the terms helpers and assistants to mean the total body of itinerant preachers. In the few instances where I have written specifically about only one group or the other, I have used the terms with a capital "H" or "A".

It has been called to my attention that the modern use of the term "lay preacher" in the Methodist Church in England refers only to local preachers and that the itinerant preachers, or the direct predecessors of the present ordained ministry, who gave their full time to the work, are not generally spoken of as "lay" preachers but rather as "the early Methodist

preachers." To avoid any misunderstanding about my use of the term "lay preacher" in reference to these assistants or travelling preachers, it must be said that during the early years of the revival in the eyes of John Wesley, in the official view of the church, and in their own sight, these men were never considered other than laymen. They had received neither episcopal nor presbyterian ordination. (It was not until the close of Wesley's life that he actually began to ordain a few of his preachers.) Therefore, in writing about these first assistants, I am impelled to call them lay preachers.

The purpose of this study is to trace the beginning and early development of lay preaching in Methodism, to lift the veil as far as possible from the lives and the work of the early Methodist lay preachers and to assess their contributions to the total eighteenth century revival in England.

It is almost an accident that any original sources for such a study are available. In the preface to the second volume of the Arminian Magazine dated January, 1779, John Wesley answers some of the first criticisms of his periodical, which had been started the year before, with this simple statement, "But I will add more variety to the historical part, by inserting some account of our Preachers."² Therefore,

² Arminian Magazine, II, 1779, p. 7.

in order to "add more variety" to his magazine, he commissioned some of his older preachers to write an account of their lives with special emphasis upon their religious experiences. Seventy-seven of these accounts appeared successively in monthly installments of the Arminian Magazine (in 1798 it became the Methodist Magazine) between 1778 and 1811. Only about sixty-six of these, however, can be properly called "early" Methodist lay preachers. (For a list of these see Appendix B.)

A selection of these lives was collected by Thomas Jackson and published in three volumes entitled, The Lives Of Early Methodist Preachers in 1837-1838. A second edition in two volumes appeared in 1846; a third edition in six volumes in 1865; and a fourth edition in six volumes in 1871. A reprint with no date appeared later as a "fifth edition." In 1912 another collection of thirty-six lives was made by John Telford and published under the title of Wesley's Veterans. An abridged edition of The Lives Of Early Methodist Preachers in one volume, edited by Mrs. Frank Stephens, appeared in 1903. The 1865 edition which contains forty-one lives, has been used throughout this study and has been usually referred to simply as the Lives. In addition several of the longer memoirs were published independently. Most of the accounts are autobiographies, but a few are biographies either written or edited after the subject's death. These lives

are the primary source of all we know today about Wesley's assistants.

There are two other secondary sources that help in revealing the life and character of the early lay preachers and should be mentioned at the outset: Charles Atmore's The Methodist Memorial which gives a short sketch of the lives of the preachers who had died before the publication date, 1801; and the obituary notices in the Minutes of Conference. Another invaluable aid in such a study is chapter XVI of William Myles' A Chronological History Of The People Called Methodists, fourth edition, 1813, in which he sets forth a list of all the "Itinerant Methodist Preachers" who labored with Wesley from 1739 to 1790. (See Appendix A.) Myles has divided them into two groups, "The First Race of Methodist Preachers From the Year 1739 to 1765" and "The Second Race. . . From 1766 to 1790." An analysis of the lists shows that in the "First Race," he has listed two hundred and twenty-one preachers including the two Wesleys and Whitefield, twelve other clergymen, and thirteen "Local" preachers in addition to one hundred and ninety-three who are properly termed "travelling preachers." In the "Second Race" he has listed four hundred and seventy-two preachers including nine ordained clergymen; three "Local" preachers, and four hundred and sixty "travelling preachers." (See Appendix C for an analysis chart.) This makes a total of six hundred and fifty-three "travelling preachers" who were

associated with Wesley during his lifetime.

In a sense all of these six hundred and fifty-three itinerants can be called the early Methodist lay preachers. But to include such a number in a single study is virtually prohibitive. I have, therefore, attempted to limit the number as far as possible to Myles' "First Race" of preachers, i.e., those who entered the itinerancy before 1766. Naturally, such an arbitrary division is impossible to follow absolutely; for instance, because of the great similarity in the life and character of the entire group of preachers and because many of the lives now available are of men who barely fall into the "Second Race," chapter III examines the life and character of the group as a whole selecting, however, the three principal illustrations from the earliest preachers. Likewise, in considering many of the activities and achievements of these "earliest" lay preachers in chapter IV, it is necessary to go beyond the arbitrary date of 1765 to the death of Wesley in 1791. But, in general, the study has been confined to the "First Race," and the phrase "the early Methodist lay preachers" is used to signify that body of assistants who began to help Wesley before 1766.

Every historian of Methodism has written something about Wesley's first assistants. They were such a vital part of the Methodist Revival that they could not be completely ignored. But considering the importance of their position in

the total movement, the attention devoted to their life and work amounts to very little. The largest quantity of authoritative information that has so far appeared about these preachers is to be found in John Simon's celebrated five volumes on John Wesley and the Methodist Revival. Here the information is scattered throughout and is viewed in relationship to the total development of Methodism which is a valuable perspective; but even if all of the material relative to the preachers were extracted and arranged, it would be clear that Simon was not primarily interested in the assistants, and, consequently, there are many serious gaps that would not be permitted in a systematic study of their life and work. There are also a number of short articles on different aspects of this topic that have appeared in the Proceedings Of The Wesley Historical Society during the last fifty years.

The one title that has been published directly on the subject that I am now considering is a small book of forty-six pages by Henry Bett entitled, The Early Methodist Preachers (1935). According to the Preface, it was first delivered as a lecture at the Methodist Conference in 1934. The last half and most valuable part of the book, however, appeared in 1925 as an article by the same author in the Proceedings entitled "The Alleged Illiteracy Of The Early Methodist Preachers." This is a splendid study of one aspect of the lives of the preachers. In 1903 G. Holden Pike published a book entitled

Wesley And His Preachers: Their Conquest Of Britain. But like the histories of Methodism, nine-tenths of the contents are devoted to Wesley and his "conquest of Britain." In reality, many general histories of the movement have more information about the preachers and their work than is contained in this volume. Owen S. Watkins in 1906 published Soldiers And Preachers Too which is a very interesting account of those Methodist preachers who spent some of their time in the army, but is thereby limited in its character. In 1944 on the two hundredth anniversary of John Wesley's first Conference, W. L. Doughty delivered a lecture before the Wesley Historical Society on "John Wesley: His Conference And His Preachers." This is a careful study and in many ways very helpful for an understanding of the relationship between Wesley and his preachers through the Conference. The lecture has been printed under the same title. This little book definitely achieves its stated goal, but is yet not a correlated, systematic study of the total life and work of Wesley's lay preachers. In addition to these works there are a number of local histories of Methodism that give isolated accounts of individual preachers and their work in a particular circuit. One of the best known and most useful is J. W. Laycock's Methodist Heroes In The Great Haworth Round, 1734 to 1784.

But after a thorough survey of the abundance of Methodist literature, it is astonishing to find that not one

independent and comprehensive study has been published on the life and work of the early Methodist lay preachers. Almost every Methodist historian with whom I have talked has emphasized the need for such a study and greatly encouraged me in the work.

The plan of the study is simple. I have: first, set forth very briefly the social, moral, and religious life of England in the eighteenth century of which these men were a part, showing the problems they faced and the difficulties they had to overcome; second, traced the rise of lay preaching in the Methodist Revival up to its establishment as an institution; third, portrayed the life and character of Wesley's assistants; fourth, outlined the work and place of these itinerants in the Methodist Societies; and fifth, listed the contributions of the early Methodist lay preachers to the eighteenth century Revival in England.

American spelling and punctuation have been used throughout this dissertation.

I must express my deep gratitude for the friendly counsel and indispensable guidance of my advisors Principal Hugh Watt and Principal Charles S. Duthie. My thanks are also due to the Rev. Edgar C. Barton, the Methodist Book Steward, the Rev. Frank H. Cumbers, the Rev. J. Henry Martin, and the staff of the Methodist Book Room for the generous way

in which they made their incomparable collection of early Methodist literature and MS letters available to me. For the large amount of time and valuable suggestions that Dr. Leslie F. Church, the Methodist Book Editor, has given at many points, I shall be forever in his debt. Special thanks must go to the Rev. W. Bardsley Brash, Principal of Disbury College, for the gracious way in which he has at all times put the facilities of the college and library at my disposal; also to the staffs of the British Museum and the Bodleian Library and especially to the Rev. J. B. Primrose and Miss E. R. Leslie for their unfailing help in the New College Library.

Any student of Methodism is necessarily indebted to the careful research of the Wesley Historical Society. The president, the Rev. F. F. Bretherton has been very considerate in all ways. To the Rev. Frank Baker, the registrar, for his thoughtful reading of Chapters II and V and his critical suggestions, I am particularly grateful. To the many others who have helped all along the way I would express my sincere thanks. But most of all I would thank my wife for her unfailing love and patience through every stage of this work and for her careful reading and correction of the typescript.

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CHAPTER I

ENGLAND IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

In England following the rigid discipline and strict morality of the Commonwealth period, it was both natural and human that there should be a strong reaction against all things puritanical. With the restoration in 1660 the moral pendulum rapidly began its backward swing. The court of Charles II set the tempo for unrestrained lewdness and wild orgies of profligacy. Both lords and commons gladly threw off the restraints of Puritanism and revelled uninhibited. The succeeding reign of James II continued or even increased the tempo. Dreadful stories of immorality and intrigue gathered about the court life. Though the coming of William and Mary to the throne in 1688 and the reign of Queen Anne during the early years of the eighteenth century brought a little more order and decency to the court of England, the people continued to react against all things that had a taint of Puritanism.

With the coming of the Hanoverians into supreme authority in 1714, there was a resurgence of immorality around the throne that rivalled the worst of the previous century. In fact, George I and George II were both publically and personally as dishonorable as the Stuarts, but ". . . without any of

their redeeming qualities, without any of the grace and elegance and taste for literature and the fine arts which to a certain extent palliated the vices of that unfortunate race. . . ."¹ Thus the moral reaction, commenced so many years before, carried over into the reign of the first two Georges when the moral and spiritual life of England reached its nadir. "The violent reaction against the reign of the Saints," says Canon Overton, "continued with more or less force almost to the end of the eighteenth century."²

Such a prolonged reaction is, indeed, both surprising and difficult to explain. Considering how short a time the Puritan ascendancy lasted and how completely it was swept away, one would normally have expected the reaction to have long since spent itself. By the time of the Hanoverians with the countless abuses heaped upon the lower classes by an insensible and heartless nobility, one might even have expected an opposite reaction against the debased and debauched life at court and among the leaders of state. Nevertheless, as late as the middle of the century, one of the two epithets hurled so often at the Methodist preachers was "Puritan."³ It was still a name of popular ridicule. The moral pendulum which

¹ Charles J. Abbey and John H. Overton, The English Church In The Eighteenth Century, p. 303.

² Ibid., p. 282.

³ Another was "Papist."

had swung so rapidly to the dark extreme seemed to be indefinitely suspended there. It was not until John Wesley and his band of lay preachers, bathed in a new pen^tecostal spirit, had spread through all of England their flaming message of salvation with its high ethical demands that the pendulum began to swing back again. H. W. V. Temperley in The Cambridge Modern History says about the leaders of the religious revival in England in the eighteenth century:

All of them were profoundly impressed with the blackness and despair of the past and the present, all hoped, desired, and believed that the future would be rich in promise, that their triumphs would be great, and the sway of their gospel irresistible. As in all other cases, their achievement fell far short of their ideal; but they effected a transformation at once so sudden in its appearance and so far-reaching in its effect, that what would have been a marvel in any age appears a miracle in this.⁴

It is necessary to know something about the social, moral and religious conditions of England in the eighteenth century in order to appreciate fully the work of these men that would elicit such a sweeping statement by so staid and considered a historian. What were the actual conditions in England during the eighteenth century?

I SOCIAL CONDITIONS

If by some magic carpet a citizen of this generation

⁴ H. W. V. Temperley, The Cambridge Modern History, Vol. VI, pp. 86-87.

were suddenly able to rise above the limits of time and go back to the England of two hundred and fifty-odd years ago, in the words of Macaulay, he would,

. . . not know one landscape in a hundred, or one building in ten thousand. The country gentleman would not recognize his own fields. The inhabitant of the town would not recognize his own street. Everything has been changed, but the great features of nature, and a few massive and durable works of human art. . . everything would be strange to us. Many thousands of square miles which are now rich corn land and meadow, intersected by green hedgerows, and dotted with villages and pleasant country seats, would appear as moors overgrown with furze, or fens abandoned to wild ducks. We should see straggling huts built of wood and covered with thatch, where we now see manufacturing towns and seaports renowned to the farthest ends of the world.⁵

Macaulay is picturing England of 1685. With but few exceptions, these vivid words describe England in the early years of the eighteenth century.

England was a land of small hamlets and scattered villages. According to the best authorities, the population at the beginning of the century was only a few more than one half of the present-day London.⁶ Even by the first census in 1801, all of England contained no more than nine million people or the same number as now inhabit greater London.

The roads of eighteenth century England could hardly

⁵ Lord Macaulay, The History Of England From The Accession Of James The Second, Vol. I, p. 272. (From the third chapter which contains his famous sketch of England in 1685.)

⁶ William Edward Hartpole Lecky, A History Of England In The Eighteenth Century, Vol. VII, see pp. 253 ff.

be called by the name. Communications throughout the land were infamous. Travel even between centers like London, Bristol, York, and Oxford in the early years of the century was a treacherous and unpredictable adventure. Those who ventured into the small isolated villages encompassed by great stretches of moors and trackless woodlands often found the trail grown so faint as to be indistinguishable. No Englishman of the century travelled as many miles through his native land as did John Wesley. In April, 1788, he records in his Journal, "I went on, through miserable roads to Blackburn. . . ." The next day he says, "Through equally good roads we got on to Padiham. . . . From hence we went in the afternoon, through still more wonderful roads to Haslingden. They were sufficient to lame any horses, and shake any carriage in pieces."⁷

With such roads and such isolation, it is easy to understand why people dropped their hoes in the field, left the work-bench unattended, and des^erted the broom and kettle when a lonely Methodist preacher was seen in the distance coming down the faint trail leading from the outside world. Wesley's entries/in his Journal about the "staring" of the people as they crowded about him, or of John Nelson's words about how the multitude did "hunger after the word" are understandable.

⁷ John Wesley, Journal, VII, pp. 378-379.

To see a strange face in many eighteenth century villages created genuine excitement and provided conversation for days. But to see and hear Wesley or one of his lay preachers with their new way of preaching in the fields a strange and simple doctrine was an event that long remained in the memories of the community. But such seclusion from the world does not always produce awe and wonder; it often produces fear and suspicion. Many times the early Methodist preacher found that unfavorable reports had preceded him and prejudiced the people against him. Instead of being welcomed by "staring" eyes and ears that "hungered after the word," he was often met by blaspheming mouths and hands that were filled with dirt and stones.

The living conditions of the people of the eighteenth century show a distressing disparity between classes. There was extreme luxury and waste among a relatively few at the top of the scale, while at the bottom there was abject poverty and want that would strain the credulity of the modern mind. In between there was a slowly growing middle class of tradesmen and manufacturers.

"Just before the century began, from 1690 to 1699 there was hardly a single year of 'average' prosperity."⁸ Bad treaties, wanton waste, large military establishments, and poor

⁸ W. E. H. Lecky, Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 20.

harvests were among the things that contributed to the poverty of the people. During the first quarter of the eighteenth century, however, the condition of the farm laborer and working class man was comparatively good.⁹ But from then on to the end of the century, the farmer and factory had suffered severe shortages of life's necessities and of the wherewithal to buy what was available. Many were the causes, familiar to the student of the early years of the industrialization of England.

As a result of high prices, low wages, widespread unemployment, and severe shortages sometimes due to excessive exports, there was almost constant disturbance. "A careful survey of the period 1740 to 1800," says Robert F. Wearmouth, "reveals the evidence that discontent continuously prevailed and serious disorders frequently occurred."¹⁰ These disorders seldom had any motive other than the adequate meeting of daily needs:

When that became difficult because of high prices and continued exports, they quickly lost their patience and vented their anger in noisy demonstrations. But when commodities remained plentiful and prices fairly stable, then the working classes maintained their tranquillity and disorders became rare. There can be no shadow of doubt about the conclusion that physical distress and anxiety were responsible for the explosions of violence so frequently occurring throughout the greater part of the century.¹¹

⁹ James E. Thorold,^{Rogers} Six Centuries Of Work And Wages The History Of English Labour, pp. 468 ff.

¹⁰ Robert F. Wearmouth, Methodism And The Common People Of The Eighteenth Century, p. 19.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 51.

An understanding of this riotous temper of the people is essential to an understanding of the trials of the early Methodist preachers. Never before had the "mob" realized its brute power as it did in the eighteenth century, nor had it ever before exercised that power so readily. Therefore, the method of objecting to excessive food prices soon became the method used to object to anything that found an opponent among the rabble. Thus the curate or the town bully found ^{at} the mob-violence was a ready weapon, easy to divert and use against the Methodist preacher who dared to condemn both sin and sinner and to proclaim a free salvation by faith.

The eighteenth century saw the real beginning of the Industrial Revolution with all of its consequent evils as well as boons. It was an age that took little thought for the worker, his health, his safety, or his living conditions. Wages and life-expectancy of the average laborer were both unbelievably low. Colliers lived in villages set apart and were considered a little less than human. Children of the tenderest ages were set to work in the most primitive mines or in the sweltering heat of a foundry from daylight till dark. They were paid miserably small wages and grew up in entire ignorance amidst the most deplorable social conditions. It was principally to this rapidly growing and neglected horde that the early Methodist preachers came with their message of salvation and hope.¹²

¹² J. H. Whiteley, Wesley's England, pp. 374 ff.

But the economic abuses under which the working class labored were not all that made their lot hard. Wearmouth puts it graphically when he says:

The necessitous poor, carrying the burdens they did, fenced in by the law, persecuted and punished in almost every direction, goaded and gaoled, having no regular work, paid the most meagre wages when they did, receiving no assistance when out of work, pressed on every side by the problem of the cost of living, forced into pauperdom, left by a selfish aristocracy to fend for themselves and almost blamed for doing it, had these alternatives, starving to death or stealing. Statistics relating to the former course cannot be had; undoubtedly a very large number of the penurious chose the latter course.¹³

By far the most serious crime that one could commit in that day was to appropriate another man's property without his consent or without giving adequate compensation. The "justice" wreaked upon culprits who committed such heinous crimes, as ". . . to steal a sheep or a horse, to snatch a man's property out of his hands and run away with it. . . to cut down trees in a garden or in an orchard. . . ,"¹⁴ to steal four pounds of butter or the vast sum of a sixpence, was "to be hanged by the neck until dead." It is almost impossible to obtain a correct knowledge of the untold amount of human suffering inflicted upon the poor by so-called English justice in punishing offences against property.¹⁵ Lecky says:

¹³ R. F. Wearmouth, op. cit., p. 91.

¹⁴ W. E. H. Lecky, op. cit., Vol. VII, p. 316.

¹⁵ R. F. Wearmouth, op. cit., pp. 91-113, for catalogue of crimes against property and the punishment inflicted.

. . . on the whole, England, which stood so high among the nations of the world in political, industrial, and intellectual eminence, ranked in most matters relating to the treatment of criminals shamefully below the average of the Continent. Nowhere else were the executions so numerous. Nowhere else were they conducted with such revolting indecency, and in scarcely any other country were the abuses in prisons so gross, so general, and so demoralizing.¹⁶

According to Blackstone's Commentaries On The Laws Of England, the number of offenses punishable by death at that time was one hundred and sixty.¹⁷ Offenses that would be termed petty larceny today were then capital charges. One illustration must suffice. It is taken from the autobiography of one of the early Methodist lay preachers who heard the muffled cry of the English prisons seventy-five years before Elizabeth Fry, and who from 1744 to 1779 became the unofficial Methodist chaplain to the Newgate criminals. In his own unlettered but dramatic style, Silas Told relates this typical story:

The next person of whom I shall give an account is one Anderson, a poor labouring man, whose character until now was unimpeachable, touching his industry, sobriety, and honesty. He had a wife far gone with child, and a daughter about seven years old: but was totally destitute of money, clothes, and a spot where to lay their heads; having been, by one of their rigid creditors, dispossessed of the mean habitation they formerly held, and necessitated to lie on the floor in such places as they were permitted.

One morning, having been long without employment, he said to his wife, "My dear, I have a strong inclination to go down upon the quays: it may be the Lord will provide

¹⁶ W. E. H. Lecky, op. cit., Vol. VII, p. 331.

¹⁷ William Blackstone, Commentaries On The Laws Of England, Vol. IV, p. 18.

for me a loaf of bread, or some employment, whereby we may sustain ourselves a little longer, or else we shall perish with hunger." He accordingly went out; but, finding all resources fail, temptation entered into his mind to commence robber. Accordingly he went into Hoxton-fields, where meeting two washerwomen, who were bringing home their clean linen, he, without bidding them stop, said to one, "Mistress, I want money." She replied, "I have only two-pence." "Then," said he, "give me that." After this he addressed the other, "You have got money, I know you have." The woman answered, "I have but four-pence." He took that likewise, and, scarce knowing what he did, he walked before them into town. When they arrived in Old-street, the two women called a constable, and both declared that he stopped them in Hoxton-fields, and robbed them of their money. He was committed to prison, tried, and cast at the Old Bailey, with several others, who lay a considerable time under sentence before the report was made to His Majesty.¹⁸

The report was death by hanging for stealing a sixpence! Cases, even more flagrant, of children eleven and twelve years old being hanged for petty thievery are matters of record.

Execution by hanging was not the only barbarity inflicted upon the hapless victims of English justice. Banishment, beheading, whipping, being "drawn and quartered," and untold forms of tortures were still practiced in the eighteenth century. But the crime against property that accounted for more arrests and more imprisonments than all others was debt.

It is a horrible fact (says Lecky) that between six thousand and seven thousand persons were arrested every year on mesne process in Middlesex alone, one-half of whom were for debts under £ 20. In the kingdom at large the

¹⁸ Silas Told, An Account Of The Life Of Mr. Silas Told, pp. 168-169.

number annually arrested for trifling debts was estimated at not less than forty thousand.¹⁹

Imprisonment in the eighteenth century was one of the worst punishments that could be inflicted upon a person.²⁰ In spite of the light thrown upon the conditions of prisons by the Parliamentary inquiry of 1729 instigated by General Oglethorpe and the later investigations of John Howard, prisons remained until well into the next century foul pits of human misery carved from the bowels of the earth. They were small, overcrowded, vermin-ridden caverns of disease. The stench that exuded from their interiors was even obnoxious and infectious to passers-by. "In most large prisons," says Lecky, "the gaol fever, produced by squalor, overcrowding, bad drainage, insufficient nourishment, and insufficient exercise, made fearful ravages, and sometimes by a righteous retribution, it spread from these centres through the rest of the community."²¹ It is a matter of record that in 1750 at the Old Bailey Assizes held over the Newgate in London, the injustice and misery below rose up and so befouled the air that two judges, the Lord Mayor, an alderman, and many of inferior rank

¹⁹ W. E. H. Lecky, op. cit., VII, p. 334.

²⁰ For a description of conditions see: Lecky, vol. VII, pp. 327 ff.; Sir Samuel Romilly, Observations On The Criminal Law Of England, As It Relates To Capital Punishments, And On The Mode In Which It Is Administered; and John Howard, The State Of The Prisons In England And Wales; and W. Blackstone, op. cit., Vol. IV.

²¹ W. E. H. Lecky, op. cit., II, p. 130.

were its victims. Someone has suggested that this might well be nature's way of underlining her teaching concerning the brotherhood of man. Nevertheless, seldom did those actually responsible for the conditions suffer the consequences as they did in this case. The prisoners and their families at home were the true sufferers because, ". . . discharged prisoners proved the centres of contagion wherever they went, and the gaol fever raged with such deadly virulence Howard computed that every year it carried away far more than perished by the gallows."²² And if possible, death by disease fell even more indiscriminately than did the retributive justice of the English courts.

Directly into these crowded holes of wretchedness the early Methodist preachers, led by Wesley, came by the scores carrying the message that Christ came to those who had need of the physician. They took seriously the Master's warning, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."²³

The distinction between classes was sharply drawn in the eighteenth century. The ruling nobility knew little about the people they ruled and cared less. It was as though these miserable creatures were pawns in a great game, to be used and

²² W. E. H. Lecky, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 130.

²³ Matthew 25:45.

cast off at the will of their "superiors." Such an attitude not only made the upper classes callous and cruel, it made those at their mercy equally brutal and hard. Nowhere is the brutality of the mob more clearly seen than in the disgusting scenes of ribaldry and profanity that accompanied executions. Public hangings were favorite spectacles--it might almost be said that they were popular amusements.²⁴ Seats were always at a premium and often brought very high prices. The most famous place of execution throughout the kingdom was Tyburn.²⁵ The celebrated procession from Newgate to Tyburn carried the condemned criminal in an open cart through London's busiest thoroughfares lined with two miles of leering, jeering faces. Hogarth in a vivid engraving has preserved one of these scenes in all of its revolting detail.²⁶ It is Plate number XI in the "Industry And Idleness" series entitled, "The Idle Prentice Executed At Tyburn." The whole event has the air of a county fair with hawkers and pick-pockets making their way through the crowd. The Ordinary is in his carriage at a safe distance from the milling mob. The cart is being drawn through the

²⁴ See: W. E. H. Lecky, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 134; and William Connor Sydney, England And The English In The Eighteenth Century, Vol. II, pp. 217 ff.

²⁵ It may be of interest to some to know that the actual location of the old Tyburn tree can be seen today in London near Hyde Park corner at the Marble Arch. In the street at the intersection of Oxford Street and Edgware Road there is a small bronze triangular plate marking the spot, while on the south side of the street there is a tablet telling the gruesome story.

²⁶ Hogarth's Works, by J. Ireland and J. Nichols. For full description see First Series, pp. 289-292.

streets while the criminal, distraught with fear, sits leaning upon his own coffin. But of special interest to this study is the figure standing beside the condemned prisoner reading to him from a book. It has been definitely established that this is Silas Told, one of Wesley's early assistants.²⁷ No man ever made more of those fateful trips than did Silas Told. His best epitaph is to be found in Wesley's Journal:

I buried what was mortal of honest Silas Told. For many years he attended the malefactors in Newgate, without fee or reward; and I suppose no man for this hundred years has been so successful in that melancholy office. God had given him peculiar talents for it; and he had amazing success therein. The greatest part of those whom he attended died in peace, and many of them in the triumph of faith.²⁸

Told has left a thrilling account of his life and work among the criminals of Newgate. His description of one of those gruesome processions is probably more authentic than anything that could be found. As he rode in the death cart beside Mrs. Brownrigg, he says:

Beckoning to the multitudes, I desired them to pray for her, at which they were rather silent, until the cart began to move. Then they triumphed over her with three huzzas, which was followed by a combination of curses.

When we had passed through the gate, carts were placed on each side of the street; filled principally with women. Here I may say, with the greatest truth, nothing could have equalled them, but the spirits let loose from the infernal pit; and, to be brief, this was the spirit of the wicked multitude all the way to the place of execution.

²⁷ Austin Dobson, Eighteenth Century Vignettes, pp. 160-3.

²⁸ John Wesley, Journal, VI, p. 221.

. . . some of the common cries from the thoughtless course, accompanied with dreadful imprecations, were, "Pull off her hat, that we may see the b_____'s face."
 . . . the incensed mob thought it not enough to rejoice over her by common rage and deflamatory abuse, but were so cruel as to cast stones, dirt, etc. . . .²⁹

To such a base and brutal people Wesley and his helpers came with the redemption of a forgiving and loving Father.

II MORAL CONDITIONS

In a few broad strokes of the brush an attempt has been made to paint a picture of the social conditions in England during the eighteenth century. In a consideration of the moral conditions during the same period, many dangers that have been already glimpsed present themselves. There is the danger of judging the past by present standards. Such a procedure is always to be avoided as far as possible. There is also the danger in any brief survey of making broad general unsubstantiated statements. This cannot be wholly avoided, but in most instances an attempt has been made to give in the footnotes where validation and further information can be found. A third danger is that a writer who must show the contributions of a group of evangelists to a great revival of religion is tempted in painting his pictorial background to darken the shadows and thereby make his lights brighter by contrast.

²⁹ Silas Told, op. cit., pp. 217-219.

This is a danger to be seen and avoided. This brief review at times may seem to emphasize too much the gloom and darkness of the age without giving due acknowledgement to those individuals and forces that through the gloom witnessed to the highest standards of moral precept and deed. In every age there are always those who stand unperturbed against the wiles of the Devil. With this fact in mind, the chief task now is to paint as candid a picture as possible of the moral conditions in eighteenth century England.

John Wesley was probably one of the severest critics of the morals of his own age. In a pamphlet first published in 1745 entitled, "A Word In Season; or, Advice To An Englishman," he says:

How dreadful then is the condition wherein we stand! On the very brink of utter destruction! But why are we thus? I am afraid the answer is too plain, to every considerate man: Because of our sins; because we have well-nigh "filled up the measure of our iniquities." For, what wickedness is there under heaven, which is not found among us at this day? Not to insist on Sabbath-breaking in every corner of our land; the thefts, cheating, fraud, extortion; the injustice, violence, oppression, and dissimulation; the lying; the robberies, sodomies, and murders; which, with a thousand unnamed villainies, are common to us and our neighbor Christians of Holland, France, and Germany; consider over and above what a plentiful harvest we have of wickedness almost peculiar to ourselves. For who can vie with us in the direction of courts of justice; in the management of public charities; or in the accomplished, barefaced wickedness which so abounds in our prisons, and fleets, and armies? Who in Europe can compare with the sloth, laziness, luxury, and effeminacy of the English gentry; or with the drunkenness, and stupid, senseless cursing and swearing, which are daily seen and heard in our streets? One great inlet, no doubt, to that flood of perjury, which so increases among us day by day; the like whereunto is not to be found in any other part of the

habitable earth. Add to all these (what is indeed the source as well as completion of all,) that open and professed Deism and rejection of the gospel, that public, avowed apostasy from the Christian faith, which reigns among the rich and the great, and hath spread from them to all ranks and orders of men, the vulgar themselves not excepted, and made us a people fitted for the "destroyer of the gentiles."³⁰

Someone might say that the condemnations of an evangelist are not to be taken too seriously because he exaggerates in order to make the people conscious of their sins. But is it so? John Wesley was always a fair and scrupulously honest man. Nevertheless, turn for a moment to the opinion of a man in no way connected with the Revival, the kindly and well-informed Sir Walter Scott. Writing just after the close of the century, he said:

We should do great injustice to the present day by comparing our manners with those of the reign of George I. The writings even of the most esteemed poets of that period contain passages which now would be accounted to deserve the pillory. Nor was the tone of conversation more pure than that of composition; for the taint of Charles II's reign continued to infect society until the present reign (George III), when, if not more moral, we are at least more decent.³¹

Men like Addison in the early years of the century were constantly crying out against the multiple evils of the day. Wesley's comprehensive condemnation is to be trusted. An age that permitted such social conditions as existed in home, in factory, and in prisons must have been morally insensitive.

³⁰ John Wesley, Works, XI, pp. 183-184.

³¹ Charles J. Abbey and John H. Overton, op. cit., quoted on p. 304.

The moral character of a people can be judged in some degree by its amusements. One of the chief pastimes of youth of both sexes and of the ladies of fashion whose education had been sadly neglected was novel-reading. During this period literally hundreds of lurid novels flowed from the pens of women writers. Jeffrey, one of the leading literary critics of the early nineteenth century, wrote ". . . a greater mass of trash and rubbish never disgraced the press of any country, than the ordinary Novels that filled and supported our circulating libraries. . ." in the eighteenth century.³² The plots were concerned chiefly with intrigues involving debased passion and prostituted sex. Sydney says that, "rotten is the one adjective which with some few exceptions, best describes them one and all."³³ It has often been suggested that the quickest way to coarsen the moral fibre of a nation is to pollute the minds of its women.

Another popular eighteenth century amusement in the larger communities was the theatre. From a study of the plays produced and the deportment of those who attended during the first half of the century,³⁴ the stage was a center of lewdness and immorality. Lecky, who regrets the objections of

³² Francis Jeffrey, "Miss Edgeworth," an essay in Contributions To The Edinburgh Review, p. 656.

³³ W. C. Sydney, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 139.

³⁴ See: Ibid., Vol. I, p. 161; also Dr. Wendeborn, A View Of England Towards The Close Of The Eighteenth Century, Vol. II, p. 225, for those who attended the theatres.

many religious people to the stage, has treated the whole matter with great restraint. Nevertheless, he admits that,

Slight and coarse comedies, or gaudy spectacles with rope dancers and ballets, appear to have been in the greatest favour, and in more serious pieces the love of butchering, so characteristic of the English stage, was long a reproach among foreign critics.³⁵

With the revival of Shakespearean plays and with the notable efforts of David Garrick, some reforms were accomplished in the general character of the stage by the end of the century.³⁶ The splendid work of Garrick and of a few others, however, is often greatly exaggerated.³⁷ During most of the eighteenth century, the theatre continued to be a place that was coarse and vulgar, that degraded rather than ennobled those who frequented it.

Probably the most universal amusement of that age which gripped the great bulk of the population with the tenacity of a narcotic was gambling. "The passion for gambling, which had been very prevalent since the Restoration, appears to have attained its climax under the first two Georges."³⁸ The time of mad speculation that infected all classes during the period of the South Sea Bubble and the many other "get-rich-quick"

³⁵ W. E. H. Lecky, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 183.

³⁶ W. C. Sydney, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 165, (abuses as late as 1782).

³⁷ Loc. cit.

³⁸ W. E. H. Lecky, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 155.

schemes stimulated the mania. Gambling of all kinds flourished among men and women of the most fashionable circles.³⁹

Trevelyan says:

Society was one vast casino. On whatever pretext and under whatever circumstances half a dozen people of fashion found themselves together, whether for music, or dancing, or politics, or for drinking the waters of each other's wine, the box was sure to be rattling, and the cards were being cut and shuffled.⁴⁰

The renewal of public lotteries contributed tremendously to spreading the taste for gambling to all classes. Hogarth in the "Industry And Idleness" series, mentioned before, has portrayed what a hold the passion had upon the lower classes. In one of his engravings a group sits on a coffin in the churchyard avidly pursuing an old English game of "hustle-cap" oblivious to the service of worship going on in the background.⁴¹

The popularity of gambling in the eighteenth century reflects the common desire to make rapid fortunes; it shows the general contempt for the slow steady gains of industry. It is part of the answer to the untold amount of unhappiness and want suffered by many families that could ill-afford to lose a week's wages at the turn of a card or the roll of a dice. In the midst of such, it was admonitions like Wesley's

³⁹ W. E. H. Lecky, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 156.

⁴⁰ John S. Simon, The Revival Of Religion In England In The Eighteenth Century, quoted on p. 82.

⁴¹ Hogarth, op. cit., Plate #11, "The Idle Prentice At Play In The Churchyard During Divine Service," First Series, pp. 274-276.

"Earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can" that took poor, wasteful, undisciplined recruits from the dregs of society and made them thrifty God-fearing members of the national family. Gambling was a drug that ran deep in the blood of eighteenth century England. The addiction has not been fully conquered unto this day.

A different type of amusement that had a tremendous popularity in the eighteenth century and that reflects the general character of the people was the baiting of animals. This type of sport that turns the natural combative instincts of animals into a means of entertainment for the human species, is one of the most debasing and brutalizing activities of civilized men. Early in the century the bear-garden was a favorite amusement center in London and in nearly every other city of any size in the realm. Later as bears became more difficult to obtain and as the sport became more popular with the lower classes, bulls were substituted. Lecky says that in Queen Anne's time there were two performances a week in London, and there was no provincial town to which the "sport" did not extend. "It was regarded on the Continent as peculiarly English. The tenacity of the English bull-dog, which would sometimes suffer itself to be cut to pieces rather than relax its hold, was a favourite subject of national boasting. . . ."⁴²

⁴² W. E. H. Lecky, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 195.

But in the rural districts, the most popular of all "sports" was cockfighting. Here again Hogarth has preserved a bit of eighteenth century life in all of its vulgar detail. Satirist though he was, Hogarth forcefully portrayed the cruel scene of a cockfight so often enacted in that day to give a mild excitement to a group of sanguinary country squires and raffish town-loafers.⁴³ Most people of the day never thought of the cockfight as a coarse or brutalizing event. In fact, the bloody pits were considered so harmless that boys held their tournaments at many schools with the masters' consent; and numerous clergy kept their own birds and had their own pits.⁴⁴

Wesley often said that one of the greatest sins of his day was the "senseless cursing and swearing which are daily seen and heard in our streets." Again the court set the tempo. It was well known that the King swore incessantly at the top of his voice. Judges followed his example and swore on the bench; the chaplain cursed the sailors aboard ship to make them attentive to his sermons; the beggar cursed the man who walked by without tossing him a coin. The Queen and the ladies of fashion were noted for the foulness of their speech.

⁴³ Hogarth, op. cit., First Series.

⁴⁴ John Simon, op. cit., pp. 84-85.

That evil, however, which probably caused more distress and suffering than all others in the eighteenth century, was the excessive consumption of alcoholic beverages--especially beer and gin. Never in the history of the nation had drunkenness been so general and so widespread. All ranks of society were caught in its tentacles. The clubs, coffee-houses, and the city taverns proved centers for the corruption of the upper and middle classes. The beer and gin-shops intensified the miseries of the poor. The ugly habit desolated both town and country; it mastered the English people in the eighteenth century.

Before that time, only the wealthy could afford the expensive wines of France and Portugal. In spite of the cost, however, there was even then a tremendous amount of hard drinking among the upper classes.⁴⁵ The principal drink of the lower classes at that same time was beer and ale. The total consumption was almost unbelievable. It has been computed that in the year 1688 no less than 12,400,000 barrels of beer and ale were brewed in England, though the population was only about five million. Drunkenness prevailed then, but it was not until gin drinking became a madness in the early Hanoverian period that the English became widely known as a "drunken race."

⁴⁵ W. E. H. Lecky, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 99.

According to Lecky, in 1689 the government of the Revolution, partly through hostility to France and partly in order to encourage home distilleries, absolutely prohibited the importation of spirits from all foreign countries, and threw open the trade of distillery to all its subjects upon the payment of certain duties.

Small as is the place which this fact occupies in English history, it was probably, if we consider all the consequences that have flowed from it, the most momentous in that of the eighteenth century--incomparably more so than any event in the purely political or military annals of the country. The fatal passion for drink was at once, and irrevocably, planted in the nation.⁴⁶

New home-produced spirits were much cheaper than the imported beverages; consequently, they became easily accessible to all. spirit drinking gradually became a habit with all classes. "But it was not till about 1724," says Lecky, "that the passion for gin-drinking appears to have infected the masses of the population, and it spread with the rapidity and violence of an epidemic."⁴⁷

The following facts may give some indication of the progress of the consumption of spirits at that time: in 1684 the British spirits distilled amounted to 527,000 gallons. In 1714 the quantity rose to 2,000,000; in 1727 to 3,601,000; and in 1735 to 5,394,000 gallons. In 1750 and 1751 more than

⁴⁶ W. E. H. Lecky, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 101.

⁴⁷ Loc. cit.

11,000,000 gallons of spirits were consumed.⁴⁸

In^{the} light of these figures, it is easy to understand the statement of London physicians in 1750 that there were in and about the metropolis no less than fourteen thousand cases of illness, most of them beyond the reach of medicine, directly attributable to gin.⁴⁹ Of all of the pictures of Hogarth's, none are more arresting than those in which he depicts the destructive effects of drunkenness. His picture entitled "Gin Lane" is, of course, a satire; yet no contemporary denys^{is} that many of the extreme examples of utter wantonness and beastliness portrayed there were repeatedly performed.⁵⁰ Bishop Martin Benson of Gloucester, writing to Bishop Berkeley from London on February 18, 1752, says:

Our people are now become--what they never before were--cruel and inhuman. Those accursed spiritous liquors which, to the shame of our Government, are so easily to be had, and in such quantities drunk, have changed the very nature of our people. And they will, if continued to be drunk, destroy the very race of the people themselves.⁵¹

It is difficult to trace all of the consequent evils of drunkenness and the liquor traffic; but it has been accurately affirmed that excessive drunkenness was the cause of

⁴⁸ W. E. H. Lecky, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 101-103.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 103.

⁵⁰ Hogarth, op. cit., Second Series, p. 63.

⁵¹ W. C. Sydney, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 62-63.

countless crimes which seemed to increase constantly during the century. It is well known that one of the liveliest trades along the southern coasts of England was that of smuggling foreign spirits and other contraband. Smuggling was even prevalent among some of the early Methodist Societies. Several times Wesley had to rebuke the societies in Cornwall and Sunderland for dealing in unlawfully imported goods.⁵²

In this rapid review of moral conditions of England during the eighteenth century the gloom is heavy and depressing. Always, however, there are those individuals who stand as a buttress against all immorality--men like Law, Howard, Garrick, Wesley, and countless hundreds of common folk whose names will be forever unknown. Yet, less can be said for the morality at that time than for any other phase of English life. Social, political, and personal morals were rotten. Mark Pattison has summarized the period truthfully when he said:

The historian of moral and religious progress. . . is under the necessity of depicting the period as one of decay of religion, licentiousness of morals, public corruption, profaneness of language--a day of "rebuks and blasphemy". . . it was an age destitute of depth or earnestness; an age whose poetry was without romance, whose philosophy was without insight, and whose public men were without character; an age of "light without love," whose 'very merits were of the earth, earthy.'⁵³

⁵² John Wesley, Journal, IV, pp. 76, 220; V, p. 151, etc.

⁵³ Mark Pattison, "Tendencies Of Religious Thought In England, 1688-1750," in Essays And Reviews, p. 254.

III RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS

It may be argued by some that social conditions are never what they should be and that examples of immorality can be found in any century; and it is not, therefore, entirely fair to judge the character of a nation by its social and moral standards. However true or false that may be, it is essential at this point to examine that which should always represent the highest and noblest in any society--its religion. Let eighteenth century England, then, be judged by its best, by its religion.

How good it would be to discover a church that was vigorous and alive proclaiming a vital personal religion and combating the multiple social and moral evils at large in the land. The heart leaps when Canon Overton says, "Never since her Reformation had the Church of England given so fair a promise of a useful and prosperous career as she did at the beginning of the eighteenth century."⁵⁴ A closer examination reveals that on the surface his statement is true. Queen Anne was devoted to the church and enthusiastic in promoting its interests. Both Whigs and Tories were anxious for its welfare. The surest way to condemn the political party in power was to cry "Church in danger!" Both the higher and

⁵⁴ Charles J. Abbey and John H. Overton, op. cit., chap. VIII, p. 279.

lower classes readily rushed to its defense. Overton sums up by saying:

It is a temptation to linger fondly on the good work done by the Church in this period, when one remembers the sad change which was so soon to follow; but the temptation must be resisted. Enough has been said to show that the days of 'good Queen Anne' were palmy days for the National Church which she loved.⁵⁵

But, then, the heart sinks. Unfortunately the church did not fulfil its promise. In fact, Overton's "cooing" over the Queen Anne period is a bit too sentimental to be true. The truth was that the apparent interest and concern for the church proved to be more political than spiritual, and the result was that its leaders became engrossed in political intrigue rather than in spiritual guidance of the people. The days of "good Queen Anne" were palmy days only on the surface. Actually, almost all the historians of the church in the eighteenth century are of a mind with Canon Overton when he writes elsewhere:

It is true that a lover of the English church cannot study it (the eighteenth century) without a blush. It is a period, for instance, of lethargy instead of activity, of worldliness instead of spirituality, of self-seeking instead of self-denial, of grossness instead of refinement. There was a grovelling instead of a noble conception of the nature and function of the church as a Christian society, an ignoring instead of a conscientious and worthy carrying out of the plain system of the church, work neglected instead of work well done. All

⁵⁵ J. H. Overton, The Church In England, Vol. II, p. 210.

this meets him at every turn.⁵⁶

The religious condition of eighteenth century England was correctly described by Carlyle as an age of "spiritual paralysis."⁵⁷

The question naturally follows, why?--why did the Church of England in the eighteenth century stand listless, gazing as a powerless and indifferent spectator at the moral distress of its children? The lethargy which paralyzed the life of the church during those years was largely the result of three factors: political involvement, intellectual controversies, and the decline of clerical leadership.

1. Political Involvement

Citizenship in any land affords many privileges and makes consequent demands. No one would deny the part that a Christian must play as a citizen of a secular state. But experience shows that when the church and state become too intimately tied up with one another, the fortunes of one often become the fortunes of the other. It then becomes necessary to use the one to bolster the other; and the work of the churchman and the work of the politician become almost identical. The result is rarely the spiritualizing of the state but almost

⁵⁶ J. H. Overton and Frederic Relton, The English Church From The Accession Of George I To The End Of The Eighteenth Century (1714-1800), p. 1.

⁵⁷ Thomas Carlyle, On Heroes, Hero-Worship And The Heroic In History, (Centenary edition), Vol. V, p. 170.

always the secularizing and weakening of the church. This was the history of the English Church in the eighteenth century.

The unfortunate relationship of the Established Church and the throne began with Henry VIII when he and his advisers invented the idea of the King as the supreme head of the church. The Stuarts, like the Tudors, made the church the willing tool of their whims and the pedestal of their throne. But the impossibility that presaged the end were the reigns of Charles II and James II. What could be more anomalous than a Roman Catholic king as the spiritual head of a protestant church? In the reign of James II the situation became so bad that clerical and lay politicians joined forces to bring it to an end.

A striking result of the doctrine of the King's headship of the church was the creation of that spirit of servility in the clergy which was so painfully manifested in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. One of the most pitiful spectacles ever witnessed was in the death chamber of Charles II when the prelates of the national church knelt down as a body and called upon their "spiritual head," at heart a Roman Catholic, to bless them. A more profligate and immoral king probably never sat on the English throne. As he raised up from his bed and solemnly blessed them, it is a sad sight to see among the kneeling company the saintly Bishop Ken.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ J. S. Simon, op. cit., pp. 102-103.

But such subserviency of the clergy to the king is to be expected when he held their ecclesiastical fortunes in his hands. Though the king ceased to be the spiritual head of the church in 1688, he did not cease to exert his influence upon the church through appointments and direction of policy. Therefore, in an age when ambitious men were consumed with a passion for preferment and knew that their only hope lay in standing in well at court, it was inevitable that the clergy should grovel at the feet of the king and of those influential with him.

When William III, a protestant, came to the throne following the Revolution, he demanded an oath of allegiance from the clergy. For almost a century, under the absolutism of the Stuarts, the church had held the doctrine of "Divine Right." The result, therefore, was that, mistaken though they might have been, four hundred of the most sincere clergy including seven bishops with the Archbishop of Canterbury at their head and many of the leading theologians refused to sign and were thus forced out of the church leaving it greatly weakened.

This period between 1688 and 1714, from the Revolution to the Accession of George I, was a period of transition. It was a period of uncertainty and adjustment within both church and government during which each great political party was courting the church's favor. During the reign of Queen Anne,

a man could not be elected to Parliament who was avowedly against the church. As it has already been mentioned, one of the rallying cries of the day, certain to raise the mob in the street as well as the leaders of government, was "Church in danger!" This new-found influence increased political intrigue of all kinds by the clergy and created a pseudo interest of the politician in the church and its "welfare." Overton says that the church became,

. . . an immense engine of political power. The most able and popular statesmen could not afford to dispense with her aid. The bench of bishops formed so compact a phalanx in the Upper House of the Legislature, and the clergy could and did influence so many elections into the Lower House, that the church had necessarily to be courted and favoured, often to the great detriment of her spiritual character.⁵⁹

After the resignation of the Non-jurors, William was able to put into their positions of influence latitudinarians, men of low church ideals, men whose doctrines were wide enough to include almost all beliefs, men whose faith never aroused them to great moral or evangelistic efforts, men who abhorred anything that suggested earnestness or enthusiasm, men whose one aim was to bring peace and quiet to the church.

During the reign of Anne there was a brief revival of the high church appointments and preaching. The result was symbolized in the Sacheverell Trial and the high church

⁵⁹ C. J. Abbey and J. H. Overton, op. cit., p. 232.

demonstrations.⁶⁰ With the coming of George I and the Whigs into power and with the excitement and disturbances of the past few years still fresh in their memory, the avowed and open policy of the government became "peace and quiet at any price." Quietness and lethargy descended upon the church with the rapidity and blackness of a winter night. "The rapid change from activity to lethargy," says Overton, "which commenced with the accession of George I is one of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of the English church."⁶¹ Many are the causes for this fact,⁶² but probably one of the most important was the tremendous sway that Sir Robert Walpole had over all things political and ecclesiastical in his day. His guiding principle, Quieta, non movere, became the adopted policy of both church and state. The result of his long ascendancy and his stultifying influence upon the spiritual life of the church cannot be over-estimated.

Thus, both the voluntary and involuntary involvement of the church in political affairs resulted inevitably in the weakening of its spiritual influence. It is a strange fact of human psychology, as well as of physics, that when effort is expended in one direction there is a corresponding

⁶⁰ J. H. Overton, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 202-204.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 211.

⁶² Ibid., see pp. 211 ff.

relaxation of effort in another direction. That was the case here--the increased involvement in affairs of state on the part of the church was accompanied by a corresponding decrease of interest in matters spiritual.

2. Intellectual Controversies

The latter part of the seventeenth century and the early eighteenth century, as it has already been suggested, was for both church and state a period of transition. In the history of the English church, it was a period fraught with many serious intellectual controversies which were another of the factors producing the "spiritual paralysis" of that age. The Deistic Controversy, the Trinitarian Controversy, the Bangorian Controversy, the Non-juring Controversy, and the various ethical controversies unsettled men's minds and hindered the work of the church in so many ways.⁶³ They diverted the energies of both the bishops and the clergy from the proper exercise of their duties in order to give answer to the critics. They, likewise, raised many doubts in the minds of all. These doubts proved a great burden to the more earnest men; but to many they proved a convenient excuse to avoid the disciplines of the Christian life.⁶⁴ It was an age in which

⁶³ See: J. H. Overton, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 218 ff. and Overton and Relton, op. cit., chapters III and IV.

⁶⁴ J. H. Overton, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 218 ff.

all of the mysteries of religion were scrutinized. All of the deep and hidden things of faith were brought into question and submitted to the test of reason.

The Deistic Controversy might well include all of the controversies of the day.⁶⁵ It is a vague term, rather broadly used, but was probably the most important of them all. John Wesley's opinion of its scope and perniciousness has already been observed.⁶⁶ As to the controversy itself, little can be said here. It was principally a battle of books although it unhappily descended from the level of the theologian into the conversation of the coffee shops. Broadly speaking, Deism, according to Overton, may be taken to mean, "an acceptance of religion, and even of the Christian religion, without the acceptance of revealed truth as found in Holy Scripture."⁶⁷ In other words, the exaltation of natural religion at the expense of revealed religion.

Of the Deistic writers probably Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke are the two outstanding names from a less than first class list. Others of note were Toland, Collins, and Tindal. At the bottom of the list should come William Woolston, whom Piette aptly calls "a woolly-headed simpleton."⁶⁸ In defense

⁶⁵ J. H. Overton, and Relton, op. cit., chpa. III and IV.

⁶⁶ See above page 18.

⁶⁷ J. H. Overton, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 219.

⁶⁸ Maximin Piette, John Wesley In The Evolution Of Protestantism, p. 123.

of orthodoxy a much more distinguished list presents itself. Probably, the two most outstanding defenses of the faith were Bishop Butler's famous Analogy and Bishop Warburton's Divine Legation Of Moses. These two voluminous and learned works stand today as standard works--i.e., universally praised and seldom read. Also in the fight on the side of revelation were the two Non-jurors, Leslie and Law, and the Dissenters, Leland, Lardner, Forster, and Doddridge. From the political field, the help of Littleton and Barrington was willingly given. Addison, Pope, and Swift enlisted their literary talents against the common enemy. The last great name on the side of orthodoxy was that of Bishop Berkeley. By the middle of the century, however, the controversy was quite dead in England, though in France and on the Continent its influence was continued.

"What think ye of Christ?" was the question which above all others troubled the church in the first six centuries of Christianity and was raised again in that age of reason to trouble the minds of many.⁶⁹ The Trinitarian Controversy raged during the early seventeen hundreds and led many into open and professed Unitarianism. The most formidable of the

⁶⁹ J. H. Overton, and Relton, op. cit., chapter III.

anti-trinitarians was Dr. Samuel Clarke who wrote Scripture Doctrine Of The Trinity which virtually became the textbook of modern Arianism. On the side of orthodoxy, however, there appeared on the scene an able/defender, Dr. Waterland. His three volumes were, A Vindication Of Christ's Divinity, Case Of Arian Subscription Considered, and The Importance Of The Doctrine Of The Trinity Asserted. Of these works Overton says:

Dr. Waterland took a comprehensive view of the whole question and left to posterity not only an effective answer to Dr. Clarke, but a masterly and luminous exposition of a fundamental doctrine of the faith, the equal to which it would be difficult to find in any other author, ancient or modern.⁷⁰

The Deistic Controversy dealt with the validity of Revelation and Holy Scripture; the Trinitarian Controversy examined the person of Jesus Christ and His place in the Holy Trinity; the Bangorian Controversy debated the true character and extent of the church of Christ.⁷¹ In 1716 Hoadly, the bishop of Bangor, published his famous treatise against the Non-jurors and began the controversy. It was his sermon on the "Nature of the Kingdom or Church of Christ" in 1717 that led to the silencing of Convocation which was another contributing factor to the critical condition of the

⁷⁰ J. H. Overton, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 227.

⁷¹ Overton and Relton, op. cit., chapter II.

church. Hoadly was the only one of the anti-church group to produce anything of first quality. But his efforts and those of his party had added weight because they had the backing of the king and his ministers. The church party, however, produced some splendid opposition material. The chief writers were Dr. Snape, Dr. Thomas Sherlock, Dr. Francis Hare, and above all, William Law who wrote, "Three Letters to The Bishop of Bangor" which, according to Overton, "are perfect masterpieces of brilliant and effective writing, and are perhaps the only results of the controversy which have lived. . . ." ⁷² Ultimately the result was another victory for the church party even against the opposition support of the king and government. The Non-jurors have already been briefly mentioned (p. 33). These men continued to exert an influence individually, but as a group they never offered any serious threat to the church.

Thus, through the principal intellectual controversies that raged in the early years of the eighteenth century, the church came triumphant. But like the man who for years fought successfully to save his home in the courts of law, returning found that through disuse and neglect weeds had grown where flowers stood and his house was in a state of collapse; so the church was secured at the bar of reason, but its spiritual

⁷² J. H. Overton, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 228.

power had been choked out by the weeds of disuse and neglect, and its moral structure was in a state of collapse. In an age of reason the Christian message was made reasonable, but in an age of immorality the Christian Church was not made a bastion of morality.

3. The Decline Of Clerical Leadership

In evaluating the general causes which tended to debase the church in the eighteenth century, one further must be mentioned--the character and work of the clergy. The early Methodist lay preachers, fired with the zeal of the Old Testament prophets in their vigorous condemnations of the temple priests, were among the clergy's most severe critics. It probably would be unfair to go to them for a portrayal of the eighteenth century clergy. But it is not necessary because as Abbey, a cautious historian and ardent lover of the Establishment says:

. . . almost all the literature of the century tells the same story. Poets; essayists, novelists, moralists, writers on social subjects, politicians, pamphleteers, writers on Theology, bishops in their charges, the friends of the church no less than its enemies, all agree that the ranks of the clergy were filled to a serious extent with men who did little to advance the cause of religion; that there were many grave abuses, and that scandals were not unfrequent.⁷³

⁷³ Charles J. Abbey, The English Church And Its Bishops, 1700-1800, Vol. I, p. 315.

Although some writers on this period are more charitable in their judgement than others, the universal opinion is that the Anglican clergy during the eighteenth century were a rather immobile, immoral lot. Of course, it must be kept in mind that in every age, regardless of the depths to which it sinks, there are always those whom Sorokin calls "moral heroes," those who stand out against the accepted and practiced evils of the day. Several "moral heroes" immediately come to mind. For instance, among the tepid, well-beneficed, unspiritual bishops of that tragic era stand the figures of Butler and Berkeley. The century that counted William Law among its theologians and Watts and Doddridge among its hymn-writers, still had some of that spiritual glow in its heart. Certainly, there must have been many homes besides that of the Epworth Rectory where genuine spiritual piety burned brightly. Yet, the truth is, the general tide of the clerical life of eighteenth century England was ebbing.

For reasons too numerous and complicated to be herein discussed,⁷⁴ the clergy throughout the century was most unpopular and on a comparatively low social level. Domestic chaplains in the great houses were made the butt of jokes and subjected to indignities of all kinds. The country parson who was simply the boon companion of the ignorant and sensual

⁷⁴ Charles J. Abbey and Overton, op. cit., p. 289.

squire of the Hanoverian period was a constant subject of satire in the lighter literature of the day. Certainly, some of the flood of contemporary criticism was exaggeration because the general tendency was to make the worst of clerical faults. Mr. Pattison says:

Since the Lollards, there had never been a time when the ministers of religion were held in so much contempt as in the Hanoverian period, or when satire upon the Churchmen was so congenial to the general feeling. This too was the more extraordinary, as there was no feeling against the Church Establishment, nor was non-conformity as a theory ever less in favour. The contempt was for the persons, manners, and characters of ecclesiastics.⁷⁵

To be sure, even many leading churchmen of the day felt that the offices of the church were often filled by men unworthy for so high and noble a profession. "What honest-hearted man," exclaims a writer in 1737, "finds not a sad despondency, with a holy impatience arising in his soul, while he sees so many weak shoulders, such unwashed hands, such unprepared feet, such rash heads, such empty souls, as are now suffered publicly to intrude themselves upon holy duties?"⁷⁶ Indubitably many unworthy men--men who were lazy and indolent, men of low ideals and easy virtue, men who loved and practiced pleasure and self-indulgence more than discipline and self-sacrifice--did obtain preferment within the church.

⁷⁵ Mark Pattison, op. cit., p. 315.

⁷⁶ Complaint of the Church of England, p. 31, as quoted in C. J. Abbey, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 316.

Two of the greatest clerical abuses in the eighteenth century church, out of which many of the above problems arose, were the widespread holding of pluralities and the scandalous practice of non-residence, evils inherited from an earlier generation.⁷⁷ The practice of conferring multiple benefices upon a single head made non-residence inevitable. As late as 1798, Bishop Buckner said:

When I look for the chief and fundamental cause of all the ministerial negligence which I trace, whence such an evident decline of religion among the people, such great inattention to the ordinances of the Church; such rudeness of manner, such disorderly conduct, such profaneness and debauchery proceed, I feel myself constrained to believe it is in no inconsiderable degree attributable to the non-residence of the clergy.⁷⁸

As Bishop Buckner has suggested, pluralities and non-residence produced many collateral evils.⁷⁹ An important one that he did not mention was clerical poverty. This multiplication of benefices in a single hand inevitably increased the poverty of many less favored. The wide gap in income among the clergy also tended to widen the breach between the "upper" and "lower" clerics. As long as such practices were accepted church patronage continued to be a matter of politics rather than of merit. Many of the "leading" clergy of the day were

⁷⁷ C. J. Abbey, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 317 ff.

⁷⁸ John Buckner, A Charge Delivered To The Clergy Of The Diocese Of Chichester, At The Primary Visitation Of That Diocese, in The Year 1798, p. 5.

⁷⁹ C. J. Abbey and Overton, op. cit., p. 284.

guilty of the most flagrant and unashamed conniving after preferment. Overton suggests that, "pluralities and non-residence being thus so common among the very men whose special duty it was to prevent them, one can hardly wonder that the evil prevailed to a sad extent among the lower clergy."⁸⁰

The deep involvement of the clergy in politics during the eighteenth century has already been suggested. They were both a force to be reckoned with and to be used by the politicians. During the reigns of the first two Georges, political morality was at such a low ebb that one could not become involved in its meshes without running a serious risk of moral defilement. "It is to be feared that politics at this period did more to debase the clergy than the clergy did to elevate politics."⁸¹

No one ever loved Oxford more dearly than John Wesley. If he had followed the desire of his heart, he would have spent his life in that "beloved place." But that did not prevent him from criticizing the inefficient and slothful habits that prevailed there and at Cambridge. Both of the great centers of learning suffered from the same disease throughout the century. It was not only Wesley, the reformer, who criticized the universities but such different kinds of men as

⁸⁰ C. J. Abbey and Overton, op. cit., p. 286.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 298.

Swift, Defoe, Gray, Gibbon, Cowper, Johnson, Adam Smith and a host of others. The incompetence and laziness so prevalent in the universities was materially reflected in the church, for from them came most of the clergy.

Both in politics and in the universities, compromise and moderation were the rules of the day. The church was so intimately tied up with them both that compromise and moderation became new commandments to be scrupulously followed. Horace Walpole writes of his time, ". . . the church was moderate and when the Ministry required it, yielding."⁸² From his point of view, and from that of the king and all in authority, nothing could have been more satisfactory than that "the church was moderate and when the Ministry required it, yielding." That, for them, was the perfect state church. It was, likewise, a perfect definition of the "spiritual paralysis" that had overtaken the church. Another illustration of the general attitude of the universities and of the church is taken from the Tatler. Mr. Bickerstaff says, with all seriousness, "We should take care never to overshoot ourselves in the pursuits even of virtue. Whether zeal or moderation be the point we aim at let us keep fire out of the one and frost out of the other."⁸³ Miss Wedgwood calls these

⁸² C. J. Abbey and Overton, op. cit., quoted on p. 298.

⁸³ Julia Wedgwood, John Wesley And The Evangelical Reaction Of The Eighteenth Century, p. 134.

words the motto of the church in the eighteenth century. Enthusiasm and sincerity were the things most to be avoided--compromise and moderation were the things most to be desired. The havoc that compromise can make with the gospel of Jesus Christ was tragically illustrated in the spiritual condition of England and her church in that age. Moderation and insincerity cut the life-line of all evangelism; and evangelism is the lifeblood of Christianity. The thing most feared and most universally condemned about the Methodists was not their doctrines nor even their irregular ways, but their enthusiasm.

With such a fear of enthusiasm pervading the clergy, one naturally asks, what was the effect upon their preaching? Overton says about the orthodox preacher of the Hanoverian age, "to such a morbid extent was his dread of extremes carried, so carefully had he to guard himself against being supposed to diverge one hair's breadth from the middle course taken up by the Church of England, that in his fear of being over-zealous he became over-tame and colourless."⁸⁴ This might even be called an over-cautious statement. Contemporary records go much further and heap scathing condemnations upon the sermons of that age, saying they were "miserable moral essays" and "unspeakably and indescribably bad."

⁸⁴ C. J. Abbey and Overton, op. cit., p. 301.

Whether these extremes are true is hard to say, but it is certain that sermons then seldom dealt with the doctrines nearest the heart of the Good News. The lack of zeal sealed the doom of evangelism in the Establishment. The clergy of that day deserted extemporaneous preaching and almost always read their sermons in a slow monotonous tone. The conscious effort always was to omit all that might be deemed as earnest or impassioned utterance. In order to avoid any accusations of extremism, often at a particularly serious point a sarcastic or humorous phrase was inserted. On the whole, the sermons were dull moral homilies read in the most unconvincing tone. Hogarth in his engraving "The Sleeping Congregation" has satirized the eighteenth century preacher and his congregation.⁸⁵ But that it portrayed an alarming amount of truth is a distressing thought.

Thus the English church of the eighteenth century stands condemned. It was concerned more with its temporal affairs and its political position than with the affairs of the spirit. It was more interested in making its faith reasonable than in making it useful unto the salvation of souls. Its clergy were more interested in obtaining preferment and

⁸⁵ Hogarth, op. cit., First series, p. 192.

enjoying many forms of self-indulgence than in attending to the exacting claims of a parish with self-sacrificing industry. Consequently, the Church of England stood as an impotent giant before the sin and suffering of her people, possessing the form but lacking the force of religion.

But what about the Dissenters? If the Church of England was failing to meet the crying needs of that day, were ~~not~~ the younger dissenting bodies, once filled with such earnestness as to force them to break away from the Establishment, not equal to the task? With the ~~the~~unprecedented toleration that came to dissenting bodies after the Act of Toleration in 1689, would it not be expected that they should use their new-found freedom and energies, formerly employed in self-preservation, now suddenly released, to preach Christ abroad and to combat the evils of the day? A careful examination is impossible here,⁸⁶ but briefly it must be said very sorrowfully that the same "spiritual paralysis" that had seized the Established Church had also gripped the dissenting churches. The removal of persecution did not have the effect of releasing energies from the struggle for existence to the betterment of public morals and the general raising of the

⁸⁶ Maximin Piette, op. cit., pp. 149-192.

spiritual tone of England. But, rather, "all the resources of their strength seem to have been used up in acquiring liberty. And once attained, they are impotent to take advantage of their sweeping victory. . . . With the prospect of struggles, tortures, and hangings gone, life seemed to lose all its zest. For them, religious fervour and persecution were things which went hand in hand. When one ceased, the other likewise disappeared. Religion lost all value when it no longer demanded the sacrifice of worldly goods, of bodily health, of life itself."⁸⁷

The same intellectual controversies that disturbed the Established Church also shook the dissenting churches to their very foundations. Likewise, it should be said that many of the choicest spirits had emigrated the century before in search of liberty and peace. Though the dissenting clergy were, on the whole, of a higher moral quality, they still succumbed to the same temptations. They were constantly tiring of their uncertain lot in the churches of dissent and deserted to the Establishment. Wesley's grandfather was a Dissenter in 1662, yet saw his son become an Anglican minister. This desertion by the flock and desertion by the pastors left the dissenting bodies weak and impotent. Little

⁸⁷ Maximin Piette, op. cit., p. 177.

wonder that they did not bring the great awakening so desperately needed.

Summary

The picture is depressing. As H. W. V. Temperley has said:

The earlier half of the eighteenth century in England is an age of materialism, a period of dim ideals, of expiring hopes. . . . We can recognize in English institutions, in English ideals, in the English philosophy of this age, the same practical materialism, the same hard rationalism, the same unreasonable self-complacency. Reason dominated alike the intellect, the will, and the passions; politics were self-interested, poetry didactic, philosophy critical and objective.⁸⁸

But after saying all of this the picture is not complete. There was another vital element in the moral and spiritual, yes, even social, life of England in the eighteenth century--the Great Revival. This movement to which John Wesley and his band of lay helpers gave their lives, revitalized the moral and spiritual life of England before the century closed. These past few pages, therefore, have been an attempt to evaluate briefly conditions in England that confronted Wesley and his helpers on the eve of the great awakening.

⁸⁸ H. W. V. Temperley, op. cit., Vol. VI, pp. 76-77.

The story of their trials, their failures, and their achievements against such overwhelming odds would make a thrilling drama of many acts. Throughout his lifetime, John Wesley was always the unrivalled protagonist upon the stage. But with him were many lesser heroes which made it a real drama and not a soliloquy. Alone Wesley would have been no more than a voice crying in the wilderness. The fact is often either forgotten or ignored that without these lay preachers his great work would not have been accomplished. The part that this intrepid band played in the total plot has never been fully appreciated. The next chapters will tell the story of these zealous evangelists who with their invincible leader transformed the face of England.



CHAPTER II

THE RISE OF LAY PREACHING IN EARLY METHODISM

Historians of the Methodist Revival and biographers of John Wesley have discovered that it is impossible to separate the beginning of Methodism from the life of Wesley. So it is impossible to separate the rise of lay preaching in the early Methodist movement from John Wesley's attitude on lay preaching. First, therefore, this chapter will deal very briefly with John Wesley and the rise of Methodism, and, secondly, more in detail with the rise of lay preaching within Methodism as related to John Wesley's developing ideas on lay preaching.

PART I -- JOHN WESLEY AND THE RISE OF METHODISM

John Wesley lived from June 17, 1703, to March 2, 1791, or nearly throughout the whole of the eighteenth century. During the last fifty years of that long life-span, he probably was more widely known and wielded a more prolonged influence over the entire nation than any other Englishman of his day; and before his death his influence stretched to such remote corners of the earth as Jamaica, Newfoundland, Antigua, Nova Scotia, and the thirteen colonies of North America, where, by 1790, his name was a household word.

Vast quantities of printed matter have been published about Wesley's early life. Nothing here could or should be added to that already well-traversed territory. Let it suffice to say that his early youth in the Epworth Rectory, his days at Charterhouse and at Oxford, his ill-fated journey as a missionary to the savages of North America and as chaplain to a group of mal-contented in Georgia, his friendship with Peter Böhler and the Moravians, and his triumphant experience in Aldersgate Street all contributed to his preparation for the task that Divine Providence had ordained for John Wesley.

It is difficult to say exactly when the Methodist Revival began. Like other great movements, it had many beginnings. John Wesley distinguishes three distinct origins in his Ecclesiastical History. He says:

The first rise of Methodism was in November, 1729, when four of us met together at Oxford; the second was in Savannah, in April 1736, when Twenty or thirty persons met at my house; the last was in London on this day, May 1, (1738) when forty or fifty of us agreed to meet together every Wednesday evening, in order to have free conversation, begun and ended with singing and prayer.¹

These were milestones along the way--definite points of new

¹ John Wesley, A Concise Ecclesiastical History, From The Birth Of Christ to the Beginning of the Present Century, vol. IV, p. 175.

departure. From the present historical perspective, however, it is clear that there were other definite beginnings in the development of the Methodist Revival that were not then obvious to Wesley. Dr. John Simon in John Wesley And The Religious Societies has carefully traced all of the numerous points of commencement climaxing in the formation of the first Methodist Society in November, 1739, when Methodism was clearly established. He has shown that the Methodist Movement was not the result of plan or intention but grew out of necessity and experience. In order to understand the rise of lay preaching during those early years, it is necessary to examine briefly each of the principal points of beginning in the growth of Methodism.

John Wesley in A Short History Of Methodism written in 1765 gives some details about the first beginning of the Methodist Revival:

In November, 1729, (just after John Wesley's return to Oxford) four young gentlemen of Oxford,--Mr. John Wesley. . . Mr. Charles Wesley. . . Mr. Morgan. . . and Mr. Kirkham. . . --began to spend some evenings in a week together, in reading, chiefly the Greek Testament. . . The exact regularity of their lives, as well as studies, occasioned a young man of Christ Church to say, 'Here is a new sect of Methodists sprung up;' alluding to some ancient phycians who were so called. The name was new and quaint; so it took immediately, and the Methodists were known all over the University.²

² John Wesley, Works, VIII, p. 348.

It is well-known of course, that Charles Wesley, before his brother's return, had already begun to meet with several other students in such a fellowship; and it was to Charles and his associates that the term "Methodist" was first applied by a student of Merton College.³ Nevertheless, one thing is certain, the name was first given at Oxford in the year 1729. This can rightly be said to be the earliest possible beginning of Methodism. In a few years, however, this small group left Oxford one by one and was soon completely dispersed. John Wesley, with his brother, Charles, and Benjamin Ingham of the Oxford Methodists, accompanied General Oglethorpe in 1735 to his colony in Georgia as a missionary to the Indians and as chaplain to the colony.

The second beginning of Methodism according to Wesley's own account, ". . . was in Savannah, in April, 1736. . . ."

The Journal entry concerning this incident says:

Not finding, as yet, any door open for the pursuing our main design,⁴ we considered in what manner we might be most useful to the little flock at Savannah. And we agreed (1) to advise the more serious among them to form themselves into a sort of little society, and to meet once or twice a week, in order to reprove, instruct, and exhort one another. (2) To select out of these a smaller number for a more intimate union with each other, which might be forwarded, partly by our conversing singly with each other, and partly by inviting them all together to our house; and this accordingly, we determined to do every Sunday in the afternoon.⁵

³ Luke Tyerman, The Life And Times of The Rev. John Wesley, vol. I, pp. 66 ff.

⁴ The "main design" was the mission to the Indians.

⁵ John Wesley, Journal, I, pp. 197-205.

The society was patterned after the Religious Societies of the Church of England; but like the first beginning, the society soon disintegrated and has no historical continuity with the later Methodist Societies. Nevertheless, the pattern was taking shape. Valuable experience was accumulating.

John Wesley, early in 1738, after returning from his unhappy experiences in America, was a confused and bewildered man earnestly seeking the assurance of salvation. Upon the advice of Peter Böhler, a Moravian, he began to preach faith hoping to find it.⁶ As a result he was excluded from one London pulpit after another. Soon the Religious Societies were almost the only place where his strange doctrines that savoured of enthusiasm were acceptable. Struggling against inward doubts and all manner of human opposition, on May 24, 1738, he stepped into the light, and the faith he preached at last became his treasured possession. From then on, because he had faith, he preached it. That experience in Aldersgate Street when John Wesley suddenly felt his heart "strangely warmed" can justifiably be called the spiritual beginning of the Methodist

⁶ Wesley says, ". . . I was, on Sunday the 5th, clearly convinced of unbelief, of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved. Immediately it struck into my mind, "Leave off preaching. How can you preach to others, who have not faith yourself?" I asked Böhler whether he thought I should leave it off or not. He answered, 'By no means.' I asked, 'But what can I preach?' He said, 'Preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith.' Accordingly, on Monday the 6th, I began preaching this new doctrine, though my soul started back from the work. (Journal, I, p. 442.)

Revival.

But, actually, at that time the movement was still a real, though largely an unwelcome, part of the Church of England. Both John and Charles Wesley were doing their work in the Religious Societies already existent within the framework of the Establishment and in whatever churches were still open to them. There was, however, one sign of separation upon the horizon of their activities, and that was the organization of the Fetter Lane Society in May of 1738 which was the last "beginning" mentioned by Wesley. The constitution of that society departed for the first time from the hard and fast rule of the Religious Societies which admitted only members of the Church of England. The new society made room for Moravians and others outside the Established Church. But as a result of John Wesley's long and frequent absences, his influence in the Fetter Lane Society decreased; and ultimately he was forced to leave the group in the hands of the Moravians who eventually incorporated it into the framework of the Moravian Church. Thus, this cannot be termed the true beginning of the Methodist Societies, though it was an important step in the development of Methodism with innovations that pointed toward that which was to come. Nevertheless, at this same time the old Religious Societies in London and elsewhere after years of sluggish inactivity were, under the impact of this new evangelical stimulus, beginning to feel the

impulses of new life.⁷ In these groups the distant rumblings of a nation-wide revival were beginning to be heard.

On March 27, 1739, John Wesley received an urgent appeal from George Whitefield to come to Bristol at once to take up the thriving work that he had recently begun there. Great things were happening in Bristol! On February 17th, in company with two friends, George Whitefield stood on a mount in Kingswood with only the sky for a canopy over his head, and inaugurated his remarkable career as a field preacher and simultaneously began his work among the colliers there. When he wrote to Wesley his popularity had never been greater. The work was flourishing. It seemed a pity to leave the "fields white unto the harvest," but his orphan house in America was desperately calling for him. Thus the urgent letter. But Wesley's health at that time was very frail. It was only over the opposition of his brother and friends that John Wesley arrived in Bristol on March 31, 1739.

On the very next day, Sunday, April 1st, Wesley accompanied Whitefield in his rounds and listened to him preach to a large assembly on the bowling-green in the Pithay and twice again at Kingswood. On April 2nd, the day set for Whitefield's departure, Wesley went to the brickyard where it

⁷ John Simon, John Wesley And The Religious Societies, p. 223.

had been announced that he would preach. He said:

At four in the afternoon I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation: speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city, to about three thousand people. The scripture on which I spoke was this. . . "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because: He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."⁸

What an appropriate text with which to commence his work as a field preacher.⁹ To that Biblical commission, Wesley was faithful unto the very end of his days.

Wesley took up the work in Bristol with characteristic zeal.¹⁰ Almost at once he set about the task of writing out orders and then organizing Bands. Soon, however, Wesley found that the authorities were finding many ways to curtail his activities besides barring him from the churches. Landlords were making it increasingly difficult for the Religious Societies to meet upon their premises. The matter of securing adequate accommodations for the rapidly growing societies like Baldwin Street and Nicholas Street was likewise posing

⁸ John Wesley, Journal, II, pp. 172-173.

⁹ The writer is aware of the fact that both John and Charles Wesley preached in the open air to the Tyburn mob in the year 1738 (Simon, op. cit. pp. 216-217; 232-233). John Wesley also spoke in the open air on the ship enroute to Georgia and on several occasions while in the colony (Journal, I, pp. 111, etc.).

¹⁰ John Wesley, Journal, II, pp. 198-199.

a real problem. While walking the streets of Bristol about his many tasks, Wesley came to a momentous decision. In his Journal on Wednesday, May 9, 1739, he records the following:

We took possession of a piece of ground, near St. James' Churchyard, in the Horsefair, where it was designed to build a room, large enough to contain both the societies of Nicholas and Baldwin Streets, and such of their acquaintance as might desire to be present with them, at such times as the Scripture was expounded. And on Saturday the 12th the first stone was laid, with the voice of praise and thanksgiving.¹¹

Curnock in the notes to the Journal does not consider this event of great importance. He insists that it was only a room for the meeting of two Religious Societies of the Church of England and not for preaching, therefore, ". . . its erection was not regarded as a separation. . . ." ¹² On the other hand, Simon says:

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of this step. Wesley himself did not foresee the consequences of his action; he did not know that so far as the Church of England was concerned, he had reached the 'parting of the ways,' and was advancing on a path that would lead to the formation of one of the greatest Protestant churches in the world.¹³

In a way both Curnock and Simon are right and are not contradictory. The New Room in Bristol was built as a meeting place for two Religious Societies of the Church of England with no

¹¹ John Wesley, Journal, II, pp. 194, 197.

¹² Ibid., p. 194n.

¹³ John Simon, op. cit., p. 289.

thought of separation. It was still a definite movement within the Establishment. Nevertheless, the many inevitable consequences that were at first not visible in the action are now obvious to an impartial observer. The construction of the New Room was certainly a new precedent, a new departure, in what was rapidly becoming a new movement.

On Monday, April 2nd, when George Whitefield left Bristol, he passed through Kingswood. There he was met by a group of admiring colliers who had come to bid him a last farewell. They also came requesting that he select a location for the school they longed to have. Whitefield placed a stone on a spot rather hurriedly chosen, knelt upon it and with the company kneeling about him prayed for the school's success. Wesley continued the project but found the site, so hastily chosen, ~~was~~ entirely unsatisfactory. On May 15th with a few of the colliers, he went in search of a better location which was found between the London and Bath roads not far from Two Mile Hill. Here on May 21st the foundation of the new school was laid with prayer and thanksgiving. When completed it consisted of a large room for the school and four small rooms at both ends in which the school-masters lived. The building was primarily a school for children and adults; but like the New Room in Bristol, it became a place of meeting for the society, and preaching was only one short step away. Wesley was now involved in two pieces of property

set aside for religious and educational purposes; and neither was owned or controlled by the Church of England.¹⁴

Early in November, 1739, found Wesley back in London again trying to settle the many troubles disturbing the Fetter Lane Society. At the same time he was busy preaching in the fields to vast audiences and carrying on his work in the other Religious Societies of the city. Sunday, November 11th, was an important day in the annals of Methodism, but both the Journal and Diary are silent about its events. Other sources of information must be sought. Dr. Whitehead, one of the three persons into whose hands Wesley entrusted his manuscripts "to be ~~be~~ burned or published as they might think proper," evidently had access to the missing Diary¹⁵ because in his reliable biography he quotes an important entry for that day.

Sunday, November 11. I preached at eight, to five or six thousand, on the spirit of bondage, and the spirit of adoption: and at five in the evening to seven or eight thousand, in the place which had been the King's Foundry for cannon. O hasten thou the time, when nation shall not rise up against nation, neither shall they know war any more.¹⁶

Whitehead says by way of comment, "This is the first time I find any mention of the Foundry, and several months before

¹⁴ Richard Green, John Wesley: Evangelist, London: Religious Tract Society, 1905, see p. 291 which asserts that the first real Methodist Society actually began in Bristol April 4, 1739.

¹⁵ From November 10, 1739, to June 1, 1740, see Journal, II, p. 319n.

¹⁶ Dr. John Whitehead, The Life of The Rev. John Wesley, M.A. . . . , vol. II, p. 125.

Mr. Wesley has mentioned it, in his printed journal."¹⁷ In 1744 Wesley wrote, An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion, in which he gives some further pertinent information:

In November, 1739, two gentlemen, then unknown to me, (Mr. Ball and Mr. Watkins,) came and desired me, once and again, to preach in a place called the Foundery, near Moorfields. With some reluctance I at length complied. I was soon after pressed to take that place into my own hands. Those who were most earnest therein lent me the purchase -money. which was one hundred and fifteen pounds.¹⁸

The exact date of the purchase is unknown, but November, 1739, is a safe conjecture.¹⁹

In 1716 the King's Foundery was located near Finsbury Square: After an explosion that killed several and injured many others, the Foundery was moved and the half destroyed building was completely abandoned to the elements.²⁰ After standing with a gaping hole in its roof and totally neglected for over twenty years, it was in 1739 hardly more than a mass of wreckage and decaying timbers. At a cost of approximately eight hundred pounds, Wesley bought the place, repaired it, and adapted it for Methodist purposes. But, even after these repairs, Silas Told in 1740 describes his first visit to the place in these words:

¹⁷ Dr. John Whitehead, op. cit. vol., II, p. 125.

¹⁸ John Wesley, Works, VIII, p. 37.

¹⁹ John Simon, op. cit., p. 327; also Tyerman, op. cit. vol. I, p. 271 ff.

²⁰ John Wesley, Journal, II, p. 316-319n; also Thomas Jackson, The Life Of The Rev. Charles Wesley, vol. II, pp. 534-536.

When we entered the Foundery, I gazed about me to make observations. Finding it a ruinous place, with an old pantile covering, a few rough deal boards put together to constitute a temporary pulpit, and several other decayed timbers, which composed the whole structure, I began to think it answered the description given of it.²¹

The Foundery as reconstructed measured about one hundred and twenty by one hundred feet. There was a chapel which would accommodate about fifteen hundred people. A bandroom, some eighty feet long and twenty feet wide, was on the ground floor behind the chapel and would accommodate about three hundred. Here assembled the classes, the five o'clock services during the Winter months and other smaller prayer meetings. One end of the room was fitted with desks for the use of the school and the other end was the book room for the sale of Wesley's publications. Over the bandroom were living quarters occupied by the Wesleys and their mother until her death in 1742. While at the end of the chapel there were rooms for the assistant preachers and the household servants.²²

The acquisition of the Foundery is somewhat different from that of the New Room in Bristol. By this time Wesley had been barred from almost every pulpit in London. The Foundery was secured primarily as a place for Wesley to preach.

²¹ Silas Told, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

²² Luke Tyerman, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 271 ff.

The bandroom for the meeting of a society was secondary. Dr. Whitehead has suggested that Wesley's decision to purchase the Foundery was taken ". . . without consulting the society in Fetter Lane, the majority of which were now alienated from him; and as a preparatory step to a final separation from the Moravian brethren."²³ Separation from the Fetter Lane Society had surely entered Wesley's mind by this time as a strong probability. Undoubtedly that fact did affect his decision. Nevertheless, Thomas Jackson's suggestion is probably nearer the heart of the matter when, in speaking about Ball and Watkins coming to Wesley and urging him to buy the Foundery, he says, "Their reason doubtless was, to provide a shelter for him, and the thousands who attended his ministry in Moorfields, especially during the Winter months, which were then fast approaching."²⁴ To provide an all-weather preaching place adequate to accommodate the multitudes must certainly have been one of the important considerations in Wesley's decision to acquire the Foundery. Who could deny in light of events immediately following that Wesley did not even then see that London would be his principal place of work and that he would need some location in which to center

²³ John Whitehead, op. cit. , vol. II, p. 125.

²⁴ Thomas Jackson, op. cit., vol. I, p. 207.

his activities? It was quite clear that there was much to be done. Convinced of his calling and unafraid, he was ready to take whatever steps were necessary to carry out his commission. This was one of the decisive steps in the life of Wesley and one of the important beginnings of Methodism. Tyerman says that the Foundery became the ". . . cradle of London Methodism."²⁵ He might have added that it soon became the center of Methodism throughout all of England.

1739 was almost over when John Wesley returned from a visit to the west country. But there was still time for another significant event to transpire before the new year dawned. On Christmas eve there is an entry in the Journal that attracts attention:

After spending part of the night at Fetter Lane, I went to a smaller company, where also we exhorted one another with hymns and spiritual songs, and poured out our hearts to God in prayer.²⁶

Though particulars in this account are lacking, the indication is that a new society of some description had actually been formed by this time.²⁷ Some of those particulars and a notion of the description of the society can be filled in by turning to the introduction of John Wesley's "The Nature, Design And General Rules of the United Societies. . ." written in 1743 when he said:

²⁵ Luke Tyerman, op. cit., vol. I, p. 273.

²⁶ John Wesley, Journal, II, p. 328.

²⁷ John Simon, op. cit., p. 329.

In the latter end of the year 1739, eight or ten persons came to me in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired (as did two or three more the next day) that I would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come; which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That we might have more time for this great work, I appointed a day when they might all come together, which from thenceforward they did every week, namely, on Thursday, in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them, (for their number increased daily,) I gave those advices, from time to time, which I judged most needful for them; and we always concluded our meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities.

This was the rise of the United Society, first in London, and then in other places. Such a society is no other than "a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation."²⁸

This was definitely a new venture. This was the beginning of a society quite distinct from the old Religious Societies.²⁹ At first there ~~does not~~ appears to have been but few rules or regulations which definitely show that the new society differed widely from the Religious Societies with their elaborate organization and unbending rule on church membership. There seems to have been but one condition for admission into the Methodist Society. It was imperative, only, that one should sincerely possess, a "desire to flee from the wrath to come; to be saved from one's sins."

A more exact date than "the latter end of 1739" for the formation of this new society cannot be fixed. The earliest

²⁸ John Wesley, Works, VIII, p. 269.

²⁹ John Simon, op. cit., p. 328 ff.

time of its meeting known with certainty was on Christmas Eve. The probability is that the society began to meet soon after the purchase of the Foundery and more than likely met there almost from the first. However that may be, Simon is surely right when he says:

Consciously or unconsciously, Wesley had entered on a new path which diverged from the way in which he had walked with old companions, and led him toward extraordinary successes of his work as an evangelist.³⁰

Though vehemently denied by Wesley then and later, this was a distinct break with the Establishment. This was the beginning of the Methodist Societies which come down to the present day Methodist Communion in an unbroken succession.

From 1740 until the death of Wesley, these societies played a major role in introducing and promoting the Methodist Revival. It was in these societies that the lay preachers of the movement were bred, trained, and graduated into the itinerancy. These societies then became the concern and responsibility of the preachers they created. The way that this new order of lay preachers was born out of necessity and experience will be the subject of the second half of this chapter.

³⁰ John Simon, op. cit., p. 329.

PART II -- THE RISE OF LAY PREACHING AND JOHN WESLEY'S
DEVELOPING IDEAS ON LAY PREACHING

I THE SITUATION

As early as the beginning of 1740 the work that the Wesleys had commenced in London and Bristol was becoming almost more than they could manage alone. The words of John Wesley, already quoted, "for their number increased daily," indicates the rapid growth of the societies in those early days. Yet their growth and stability largely depended upon the firm sure guidance of a strong hand like that of John Wesley. His experience in the Fetter Lane Society made it evident that close supervision and loving guidance were essential if the energies of the societies were not to be dissipated in fruitless controversy. Even with the help of his brother, Charles, John Wesley was no longer able to give that close supervision and personal counsel so constantly needed, or even to know by name every member of the societies. The Diary reveals the fact that on the ninth and twelfth of June, 1740, John Wesley spent a considerable amount of time writing out the names of the members of the Foundery Society.³¹ It is clear that the number was growing so rapidly that he found a roll was helpful for remembering the names and for recognizing and excluding the persistent trouble-makers who were

³¹ John Wesley, Journal, II, pp. 350-351.

becoming increasingly difficult.

For instance, on June 19, 1740, John Wesley records an incident that illustrates the sort of problem with which the societies were constantly faced. A certain Mr. Acourt had proved himself absolutely adamant in his determination to keep the Foundery Society in a state of contention. Charles Wesley, often hasty in his decisions and always quick to act, gave directions that Mr. Acourt was to^{be} excluded from all future society meetings. His orders were obeyed. When John returned to London, Mr. Acourt ran to him hoping for a reversal of Charles' decision. The Journal account is most revealing:

In the evening Mr. Acourt complained that Mr. Nowers had hindered his going into our society. Mr. Nowers answered, "It was by Mr. C. Wesley's order." "What," said Mr. Acourt, "do you refuse admitting a person into your society only because he differs from you in opinion?" I answered, "No; but what opinion do you mean?" He said, "That of election. I hold a certain number is elected from eternity. And these must and shall be saved. And the rest of mankind must and shall be damned. And many of your society hold the same." I replied, "I never asked whether they hold it or no. Only let them not trouble others by disputing about it." He said, "Nay, but I will dispute about it." "What, wherever you come?" "Yes, wherever I come." "Why, then, would you come among us, who you know are of another mind?" "Because you are all wrong, and I am resolved to set you all right." "I fear your coming with this view would neither profit you nor us." He concluded, "Then I will go and tell all the world that you and your brother are false prophets. And I tell you, in one fortnight you will all be in confusion."

Fri. 20.--I mentioned this to our society, and without entering into the controversy, besought all of them who were weak in the faith not to "receive one another to doubtful disputations," but simply to follow after holiness, and the things that make for peace.³²

³² John Wesley, Journal, II, p. 353, June 19-20, 1740.

These early days of the Revival were crucial. Loving wisdom and sometimes a strong hand were essential to the maintenance of a spirit of peace and harmony conducive to the working of the Divine Spirit.

Obviously, even with John in Bristol and Charles in London, uninterrupted oversight could not always be maintained because exchanges could not always be arranged without a break. At the same time, with the new and rapidly growing societies demanding so much time, there were country districts and other centers that were crying for the services of the Wesleys. Any extension of their work into other parts of the land would also necessitate an interruption of the work in the two great centers. The situation, therefore, demanded more "supervisors," more strong leaders with authority. The plain fact was--the Wesleys needed helpers. Helpers of some description had to be found at once or their work had to be curtailed.

II POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Wesley naturally looked first to the clergy for aid and hoped throughout his ministry that they would respond to the call of inward religion and take up the cause with zeal. But outside of a very meagre list of names among the Anglican clergy,³³ there were none that Wesley could truly call friends

³³ John Simon, John Wesley And The Methodist Societies, see pp. 346-347 for list of friendly clergy.

in the work of bringing "Scriptural Christianity" to the land. Those few who were friendly to him and to his work were busy in their own parishes. They could give him little active assistance.

In 1740 it seems that Wesley attempted to alleviate this situation and provide a substitute who was to have oversight of the Foundery Society during a period when both he and his brother were to be absent. He chose a clergyman, one of the early Oxford Methodists named John Simpson; but his choice was unfortunate. This was during the period when the disputes were raging within the Fetter Lane Society over "stillness" or Antinomianism which was so vigorously opposed by the Wesleys. On April 3rd Charles Wesley returned to find that Simpson had adopted Antinomianism and was completely disrupting the Foundery Society. He says:

I talked with poor perverted Mr. Simpson. The still ones had carried their point. . . . I asked whether he was still in the means of grace, or out of them. "Means of grace!" he answered; "there are none. Neither is there any good to be got by those you call such, or any obligation upon us to use them. Sometimes I go to church and sacrament for example sake: but it is a thing of mere indifference. Most of us have cast them off. You must not speak a word in recommendation of them: that is setting people upon working."³⁴

It was almost in a spirit of hopeless exasperation that Charles remarked, "What shall we say to these things? I then said little, but thought, 'Ah, my brother! you have set the wolf to

³⁴ Charles Wesley, Journal, I, 205-206, April 3, 1740.

keep the sheep.'"³⁵ Of course, this false step to mitigate a severe problem had to be immediately retraced.

Faced with the absolute necessity of immediate assistance in the work, unable to find that assistance among the regularly ordained clergy, Wesley was forced to turn to another source of help--the vast supply of laymen, many of whom were both qualified by natural gifts and eager to serve him as "sons in the gospel."³⁶ The very nature and organization of the Religious Societies and the early Methodist Societies had prepared many for this eventuality. When men become vitally interested in religion and begin to study and discuss the Bible, to pray extemporaneously, and to expound and exhort upon the Scriptures with an earnestness born of conviction, preaching is but a short step away. In Dr. Woodward's account of the Religious Societies, it is clear that even in the early days this process of public praying, studying, discussing, and expounding the Scriptures led to what were essentially

³⁵ Charles Wesley, Journal, I, p. 206. .

³⁶ The phrase "sons in the gospel" has an interesting history and was used from the beginning unto Wesley's death to indicate the group of assistants who worked as superintendents of the Methodist Societies. Writing later about the beginning of lay preaching in the Large Minutes, Wesley said: "After a time a young man, named Thomas Maxfield, came and desired to help me as a son in the gospel. Soon after came a second, Thomas Richards; and then a third, Thomas Westell. These severally desired to serve me as sons and to labour when and where I should direct." (Works, VIII, p. 311.) Almost all of the letters by these men to Wesley close with the phrase, "I am your dutiful and affectionate son and servant," or, more commonly, just, "Your obedient son in the gospel."

lay preachers, so that one of the criticisms levelled at the society members was that ". . . they do invade and intrude upon the Minister's Office."³⁷ Indeed, he must be keen who can distinguish between the exhorter and the preacher. The process, therefore, by which a large number of laymen grew to the position where they were ready and able to present themselves as assistants to Wesley was simple and almost inevitable.

Wesley's own account of the attitude of the clergy, with which he was confronted, that forced him to accept lay helpers at that time and his able defense of his action is recorded in A Father Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion written in December, 1745. After giving a brief survey of the use of laymen as preachers in ancient Israel, during the Reformation, and even in the Church of England of his day, he says:

It pleased God, by two or three Ministers of the Church of England, to call many sinners to repentance; who, in several parts, were undeniably turned from a course of sin, to a course of holiness.

The Ministers of the places where this was done ought to have received those Ministers with open arms; and to have taken them who had just begun to serve God into their peculiar care; watching over them in tender love, lest they should fall back into the snare of the devil.

Instead of this, the greater part spoke of those Ministers as if the devil, not God had sent them. Some repelled them from the Lord's table; others stirred up the people against them, representing them, even in their public discourses, as fellows not fit to live; Papists, heretics, traitors; conspirators against their King and country.

³⁷ Josiah Woodward, An Account Of The Rise And Progress Of The Religious Societies In the City of London, etc. . . . p. 109.

And how did they watch over the sinners lately reformed? Even as a leopard watcheth over his prey. They drove some of them also from the Lord's table; to which till now they had no desire to approach. They preached all manner of evil concerning them, openly cursing them in the name of the Lord. They turned many out of their work; persuaded others to do so too, and harassed them all manner of ways.

The event was, that some were wearied out, and so turned back to their vomit again. And then these good Pastors gloried over them, and endeavoured to shake others by their example.

15. When the Ministers by whom God had helped them before came again to those places, great part of their work was to begin again; (if it could be begun again;) but the relapsers were often so hardened in sin, that no impression could be made upon them.

What could they do in a case of so extreme necessity, where many souls lay at stake?

No Clergyman would assist at all. The expedient that remained was, to find some one among themselves, who was upright of heart, and of sound judgment in the things of God; and to desire him to meet the rest as often as he could, in order to confirm them, or by prayer, or by exhortation.

God immediately gave a blessing hereto. In several places, by means of these plain men, not only those who had already begun to run well were hindered from drawing back to perdition; but other sinners also, from time to time, were converted from the error of their ways.

This plain account of the whole proceeding I take to be the best defence of it. I know no scripture which forbids making use of such help, in a case of such necessity. And I praise God who has given even this help to those poor sheep, when "their own shepherds pitied them not."³⁸

By the time that this was written, Wesley had fully accepted the help of lay preachers. But the process by which he came to this unorthodox position was neither short nor easy. It will be necessary to trace that process briefly.

³⁸ John Wesley, Works, VIII, pp. 223-224.

III WESLEY'S DEVELOPING IDEAS ON LAY PREACHING

To understand John Wesley's developing ideas on lay preaching it is necessary to go all the way back to the kitchen of the Epworth Rectory in the year 1711. John Wesley was not yet eight years of age but already well-versed in Scripture and spiritual things. His father was on one of his long sojourns to London attending Convocation. On Sunday evenings Susanna Wesley began to hold a service in the rectory kitchen for her children and servants. Soon others requested that they might be allowed to attend until by the end of January, 1711, as many as two hundred were present on a Sunday evening, and others were turned away.³⁹ Susanna writes of the first services:

With those few neighbors who then came to me I discoursed more freely and affectionately than before. I chose the best and most awakening sermons we had, and I spent more time with them in such exercises. Since then our company has increased every night, for I dare deny none that asks admittance. . . . We meet not on any worldly design. We banish all temporal concerns from our Society; none is suffered to mingle any discourse about them with our reading or singing; we keep close to the business of the day, and as soon as it is over they all go home.⁴⁰

Susanna read sermons, undoubtedly, but she also says, "I discoursed more freely and affectionately than before." There is little doubt that as her keen mind began to work, she made her

³⁹ Eliza Clarke, Susanna Wesley, p. 104, Letter dated Epworth⁴⁰ February 6, 1712, (old style).
Ibid., p. 104-105.

own application to the sermons she read, if she did not occasionally deliver an original discourse of her own. The immediate result of these activities was a large increase in church attendance and a spiritual quickening throughout Epworth.

Upon his return, Samuel Wesley soon put a stop to this irregular practice, but the whole affair must surely have made a strong impression upon the young John. The mere excitement of having two hundred people (?--or even a few less) crowd into one's kitchen every Sunday evening, in itself, would have created a lasting memory. The strong defense that Susanna made to Samuel for her actions and the profound influence she always exerted over her son are well known. In succeeding years he often must have felt the essential rightness of the thing that she did. In light of his later work among the Religious Societies and then the Methodist Societies, it is almost certain that his thoughts frequently went back to the picture of his mother in those early Epworth meetings standing in the midst of her family and neighbors proclaiming the word of God.

During his years at Oxford, John Wesley was strongly influenced by high church principles that frowned upon laymen ever usurping the functions of the priesthood. But those principles began to fall one by one before the exigencies of the moment. While he was enroute to Georgia, his high churchmanship was clearly evidenced. Wesley writes in his Journal on Friday, October 17, 1735, before the ship had sailed, "I

baptized at his desire Ambrosius Tackner,⁴¹ age thirty; he had received only lay baptism before."⁴² But the very next day two illustrations arise of Wesley bowing his principles before circumstances. He says, "The weather being fair and calm, we had the morning service on quarter-deck. I now first preached extempore."⁴³ Taking the service from the more formal atmosphere of a cabin arranged for worship into the open air was a step toward his great labors as a field preacher. He later refers to the incident as his first open air service.⁴⁴ Extempore preaching was another important departure from those principles which so strongly influenced him at that period of life. But it is not difficult to see Wesley standing there upon the deck with his sensitive appreciation of nature, overcome by the beauty of the calm October morning, simply speaking from the fullness of his heart. Yet his high churchmanship is still clearly evident as he says, "We then celebrated the Holy Eucharist, (Ambrosius Tackner) and two more communicating with us--a little flock, which we did not doubt God would increase in due time."⁴⁵ It is clear that only those "properly" baptized by episcopally ordained

⁴¹ Ambrosius Tackner was one of a group of German Moravians aboard the Simmonds. Wesley began to study German at once from Tackner that he might converse with the Moravians.

⁴² John Wesley, Journal, I, p. 111.

⁴³ Loc. cit.

⁴⁴ John Wesley, Works, X, p. 447.

⁴⁵ John Wesley, Journal, I, p. 111.

clergy could ^{hold} fellowship in the Lord's Supper with Wesley.

It is interesting to observe Wesley's changing ideas on extempore prayer during his Georgia days. On January 2, 1737, he says:

We came to the settlement of the Scotch Highlanders at Darien, (about twenty miles from Frederica.) I was surprised to hear an extempore prayer before a written sermon. Are not then the words we speak to God to be set in order at least as carefully as those we speak to our fellow worms?⁴⁶

Only fifteen months later, just after his return to England, he writes:

Being at Mr. Fox's society, my heart was so full that I could not confine myself to the forms of prayer which we were accustomed to use there. Neither do I propose to be confined to them any more; but to pray indifferently, with a form or without, as I may find suitable to particular occasions.⁴⁷

It would be interesting to follow closely the story of this ecclesiastical phase of Wesley's life and the way that the changes came, but that runs beyond the scope of this study. It is sufficient to note that much of the unhappiness and most of the failures that came to Wesley in Georgia were due to his high church principles. At the same time, however, there amidst the most primitive conditions of life many of those principles were sacrificed before the altar of expediency.

⁴⁶ John Wesley, Journal, I, p. 309

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 448-449.

Among them was his idea on the part that laymen could play in the direction of spiritual affairs.

During his stay in America, Wesley in close fellowship with the Moravians gained a great admiration for them, for their hold upon God, and for their deep abiding assurance of salvation. The wide use that the Moravians made of lay preachers is well known. It is certain that in his long conversations with Spangenberg and Nitchsmann the validity of lay preaching was discussed. His interest in the Moravian ordination assures it as a topic of concern.⁴⁸ Wesley said several years later, ". . . that the Moravians are other than laymen I know not."⁴⁹

Wesley's parish in America was extremely large. In addition to Savannah and Frederica, he had the pastoral responsibility of such outlying communities as Thunderbolt, Cowpen, Irene, Skidoway. Doubtless, he received help from numerous lay members of these communities whose responsibilities varied from visitation to acting as convener for society meetings and to reading prayers. It is definitely known that Miss Bovey and Mrs. Burnside, members of the Savannah Society,

⁴⁸ John Simon, John Wesley And The Religious Societies, pp. 131-132.

⁴⁹ John Wesley, Journal, II, p. 448, April 21, 1741.

did the work of deaconesses. Mr. Hows conducted a communicants' class regularly. On September 2, 1736, Mr. Reed in Frederica assumed still more important duties:

I was now in hourly expectation of setting out for Savannah, (says Wesley). Mr. Reed promised to read evening prayers in my absence and five or six persons agreed to spend an hour together every day in singing, reading, and exhorting one another.⁵⁰

The employment of a layman to read evening prayers is reminiscent of the arrangement in the Religious Societies described in Dr. Woodward's, An Account Of The Rise And Progress Of The Religious Societies. As Simon says, "It was prophetic of the action of Wesley in the years that were rapidly approaching."⁵¹ But passing over all others, Wesley's most outstanding lay assistant in Georgia was a young man named Charles Delamotte.

Charles Delamotte was the son of a sugar merchant in London⁵² and was only twenty-one when he sailed with Wesley for Georgia. Doubtless, he was well-educated,⁵³ but little is known with certainty about his early life. Charles' parents did everything in their power to dissuade him from the American adventure. His father offered to set him up in a good business if he would not undertake the journey.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ John Wesley, Journal, I, p. 268.

⁵¹ John Simon, op. cit., p. 153.

⁵² John Wesley, Journal, I, p. 106; L. Tyerman, op. cit., vol. I, p. 118, says his father was a Middlesex Magistrate and gives as source of his information, "Mss."

⁵⁴ L. Tyerman, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 118-119.

⁵³ His brother, William was a student at Cambridge.

But Delamotte would not be altered in his determination
 ". . . to leave the world and give himself up entirely to
 God. . . ." ⁵⁵ Charles was also a great personal admirer of
 Wesley and was completely devoted to him. Finally, his plead-
 ing prevailed and he obtained a partial consent from his
 father after Wesley agreed to (more or less) assume the position
 of guardian. Delamotte went on the expedition with the status
 of Wesley's personal servant. To Wesley's direction he sub-
 mitted all of his time and energy. As Tyerman says, he
 ". . . served under him (Wesley) as a son in the gospel, did
 much good, and endured great hardships for the sake of Christ." ⁵⁶
 Wesley loved him as his own son and lived with him constantly,
 using him in many capacities--as teacher of the school he
 organized, ⁵⁷ as helper and travelling companion, and as a
 lay assistant or substitute during his absences from Savan-
 nah. In May, 1737, Wesley had to be away from Savannah for a
 considerable time. Returning on May 30th, he said:

I (took boat, and before noon) came safe to Savannah.
 Here I found my little flock in a better state than I
 could have expected, God having been pleased greatly to
 bless the endeavours of my fellow labourer while I was
 absent from them. ⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Benjamin Ingham, "Extract from Ingham's Journal",
 in John Wesley's Journal, Appendix X, vol. VIII, p. 283.

⁵⁶ L. Tyerman, op. cit., vol. I, p. 119.

⁵⁷ Leslie F. Church, Oglethorpe: A Study Of Philanthropy
 In England And Georgia, pp. 221-222.

⁵⁸ John Wesley, Journal, I, p. 353.

A note by the editor indicates that Ingham had already sailed for England and that Delamotte was the only "fellow labourer" left in the colony.⁵⁹ This reference was surely to Charles Delamotte. Curnock says, "Both at Frederica and Savannah, Wesley was driven by stress of circumstances to employ a layman as his substitute. The Minutes and Accounts of the Georgia Trustees show that Delamotte's voluntary services were recognized, though not with any payment in the nature of a salary."⁶⁰ His success as a lay assistant in Wesley's absence is testified to in the Journal:

Those who desired to be followers of Christ had not made my absence an excuse for the neglect of assembling themselves together; and by the blessing of God on their endeavours, most of them were more steadfast and zealous of good works than when I left them.⁶¹

It is unfortunate that there is no detailed information concerning the activities of Delamotte during Wesley's absence. But from the known facts certain deductions can be drawn. Miss Bovey and Mrs. Burnside were carrying on the work of a deaconess; Mr. Hows continued conducting his communicants' class; and Wesley remarked that the flock did not neglect "assembling themselves together." Therefore, Delamotte's task must have been that of a substitute for Wesley--to conduct

⁵⁹ John Wesley, Journal, I, p. 353n.

⁶⁰ Loc. cit.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 353.

the society meetings and regular services, to read prayers, to exhort, and to have general oversight of the spiritual affairs of Savannah. Too much must not be assumed from these meagre facts, but in light of the poor state of religion in the colony and of Delamotte's apparent success, it would not be too presumptuous to say that this young layman did more than read prayers. He gave exhortations that both maintained interest among his hearers and strengthened them in the faith to which Wesley bore testimony upon his return.

When Wesley left Georgia in December, 1737, Ingham and Charles Wesley had already returned to England. It was not until May 7, 1738, that George Whitefield arrived in the colony.⁶² Therefore, Delamotte was left alone to care for the Church of England services and societies. Not much is known about Delamotte's activities during the period that he was in Georgia alone. On February 23, 1738, he wrote a long letter to John Wesley largely about the actions of his old antagonists in the colony and about the scandals troubling Savannah. Through it all, however, there comes some idea of his work.

Savannah, February 23, 1738.

O my Dear Brother,--How greatly do I long after you in the bowels of Jesus Christ! What God hath done for us in your absence, I trust, will be a comfort to you and all the brethren.

⁶² Thomas Jackson, The Life of The Rev. Charles Wesley, M. A., vol. I, p. 100.

For six weeks we went on in the spirit of slumber, and even poor William had left off most of the means of grace. But hath God forgotten to be gracious? No, for when things were desperate, then the Almighty laid to His hand and let the enemy loose upon us, who with scorpions hath united us together, and against all opposition do now join with one heart and one voice in Morning and Evening Prayers. Some who were hirelings are gone out from amongst us (Mrs. Cross, Mrs. Ann, Mr. Grant), and others who never have had any sense of their duty are become zealous advocates for the Lord God of Hosts.

Oh, if you did but know how much one or more of you were wanting here, I am sure you would not delay coming one minute. Let not then a soldier of Jesus Christ tarry to provide gold or silver or scrip for their journey, for the disciple must be as his Master and the servant as his Lord.⁶³

Delamotte sailed for England on June 2, 1738, just about one month after Whitefield's arrival. Whitefield has left a very interesting appraisal of the work of Delamotte which gives a further important insight into his activities. He says:

This evening I parted with kind Captain Whiting, and my dear friend Delamotte, who embarked for England about seven at night. The poor people lamented the loss of him, and went to the water-side, to take a last farewell. And good reason they had to do so; for he has been indefatigable in feeding Christ's lambs with the sincere milk of the word; and many of them, blessed be God, have grown thereby. Surely I must labour most heartily, since I come after such worthy predecessors.⁶⁴

Probably the principal reason why John Wesley left Delamotte behind in Georgia when he sailed for England was because there was no one else to whom he could entrust the work he had

⁶³ John Wesley, Journal, VIII, Appendix XX, pp. 308-309.

⁶⁴ Thomas Jackson, op. cit., vol. I, p. 101.

commenced.⁶⁵ With his blessing and with prayer for Divine power, Wesley left Delamotte to care for the flock. Delamotte applied himself diligently to the task. Something resembling a revival resulted from his labors. Whitefield's commendation is enthusiastic. His words, ". . . for he has been indefatigable in feeding Christ's lambs with the sincere milk of the word. . ." is almost certain assurance that Delamotte fulfilled all of the functions of a spiritual leader--including preaching.

Delamotte's first meeting with Wesley after his return to England was on Thursday, November 23, 1738, when they spent five days together.⁶⁶ Wesley gives considerable space to their conversations in his Journal which show the wide doctrinal breach that had already opened between them. There are several other references to Delamotte in the later Journals of John and Charles Wesley. On April 5, 1740, Charles Wesley records:

I spent an hour with Charles Delamotte. The Philistines have been upon him, and prevailed. He has given up the ordinances, as to their being matter of duty. Only his practice lies a little behind his faith. He uses them still.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ There was at least one other clergyman who resided at Purrysburg and was notorious for his irregularities visited Savannah occasionally. But Wesley had no dealings with him, especially after he conducted the marriage of Sophia Hopkey and Mr. Williamson without his consent as their minister.

⁶⁶ John Wesley, Journal, II, p. 103.

⁶⁷ Charles Wesley, Journal, I, p. 206.

By this time Delamotte had become a Moravian and had accepted the doctrine of "stillness." On May 16, 1782, John Wesley wrote:

I preached in the new house at Barrow. I was well pleased to meet with my old fellow traveller, Charles Delamotte, here. He gave me an invitation to lodge at his house, which I willingly accepted of. He seemed to be just the same as when we lodged together, five-and-forty years ago. Only he complained of the infirmities of old age, which, through the mercy of God, I know nothing of.⁶⁸

Though their friendship continued throughout life, their paths diverged. Delamotte became a Moravian minister and after his return from America never worked closely with Wesley again.

After Wesley's transforming experience at Aldersgate, his mind was clouded by a period of uncertainty and doubt. During this period he made a pilgrimage to the Moravian community of Herrnhut. Many of the ideas that came to him during that journey lay dormant in his mind for years; but results of that visit can be seen in the developments of his later life. One concept affected was his developing attitude on lay preaching. At Herrnhut Wesley met a man with the Dickens-like name of Christian David.⁶⁹ "Four times," says Wesley, "I enjoyed the blessing of hearing him preach during

⁶⁸ John Wesley, Journal, VI, p. 353.

⁶⁹ Ibid., II, p. 25.

the few days I spent here; and every time he chose the very subject which I should have desired, had I spoken to him before."⁷⁰ In private conversation he heard his story.

Christian David was an unlettered man known as the "Bush Preacher." He was,

. . . the man who, five years previous to Wesley's present visit, conducted the first missionaries to Greenland, and who, though but a poor mechanic, preached to the court of the king of Denmark as he went,--an itinerant evangelist of no mean order, having paid eleven gospel visits to Moravia, three to Greenland, and many others to Denmark, England, and Holland, besides visiting all the Moravian congregations throughout the whole of Germany,--a man who, when he happened to be at home at Herrnhuth, and not engaged in active services for the church, always followed his trade as a carpenter, and secured the respect and love of both young and old,--a man who often made mistakes, but was always ready to confess his errors when pointed out to him,--deeply devoted to the work of Christ, and living in the closest communion with Him,--shunning no toil, and fearing no danger,--reading the Bible continually, and never tiring of its precious truths,--his sermons wanting in polish, but not in power,--for more than thirty years an itinerant, out-door German preacher,--and who in 1751, at the age of sixty, went triumphantly to heaven.⁷¹

Such was the lay preacher whom John Wesley, the scholar and priest, took every opportunity to hear during his days in Herrnhut. As he sat and listened, his troubled soul was soothed. As his doubts began to fade, it is impossible not to look ahead and see some of the sainted laymen of Methodism employed in the glorious work of arousing men from their sins and erasing doubts from tempestuous souls. Tyerman has said

⁷⁰ John Wesley, Journal, II, p. 25.

⁷¹ Luke Tyerman, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 200-201.

it so well, he must be quoted again:

The philosopher may sneer at the sight of one of the most distinguished fellows of Lincoln College sitting in the Herrnhuth chapel and in the carpenter's cottage, to be taught by a man like this; but let it be remembered that while the Oxford student, in letters, was immeasurably superior to the German mechanic, the German mechanic was as much superior to the Oxford student in the science of saving truth; and besides that, he spoke not only from clear convictions, but from personal experience. Even now many a man, profoundly learned in languages and in philosophy, might receive knowledge more important than any he already has, if he would condescend to imitate Wesley's example, and stoop to be taught by some poor itinerating preacher, who, though a wayfaring man, and in all other things a fool, is yet "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."⁷²

There is no doubt that being so powerfully affected by this "Bush Preacher," much of Wesley's high church revulsion against lay preaching was removed. Christian David must have remained long in the memory of Wesley and often given him a sense of assurance about the essential "rightness" of lay preaching.

Friday, March 9, 1739, found John Wesley on his way to London. Breaking his journey in Reading, he met John Cennick for the first time through the instrumentality of Charles Kinchin, one of the early Oxford Methodists. This young man from Reading was destined to play an important role in the development of John Wesley's ideas on lay preaching.

⁷² Luke Tyerman, op. cit., vol. I, p. 201.

John Cennick was born in Reading in 1718. Though for two generations his family had been Quakers and had endured the persecution that was then heaped upon the Society of Friends, John was baptized in St. Lawrence Church beside the Municipal Buildings, and was reared in the Anglican fold.⁷³ From the tenderest age, John was submitted to a strict religious discipline. He attended service twice a day with his mother and while still quite young was confirmed and partook of the Holy Communion. One of the earliest impressions of John's youth was standing beside the death-bed of his aged aunt. There in his presence she solemnly told her maid that "the Lord had stood by her in the night, and invited her to drink of the fountain of life."⁷⁴ ^{It was a} ~~The~~ ^{fr} frightening experience ^{and} ^{probably} explains his life-long fear of ghosts and the constant dread that someday he might actually meet the Devil.

According to his autobiography, his youth was filled with periods of frivolity and sin followed by periods of sorrow and repentance. In 1735 while walking along Cheapside in London, he was suddenly convinced of sin and sank, "... from the height of mirth to the lowest depths of despair."⁷⁵ At once he stopped singing secular songs, playing cards, and attending theaters. Then began a period of earnest church-going

⁷³ J. E. Hutton, A History Of The Moravian Church, p. 317.

⁷⁴ John Wesley, Journal, II, p. 149n.

⁷⁵ Ibid., II, p. 150n.

and severe asceticism which included long and frequent fasts and strictly observed periods for prayers, sometimes as often as nine times a day. There were occasions when he desired to give himself up completely, as he termed it, and enter a Roman Catholic monastery. At other times he longed to live the life of a hermit in some secluded cave feeding on roots and herbs and forest fruits. Fancying dry bread too great an indulgence for so great a sinner as himself, he almost achieved his desired austere diet by living on potatoes, acorns, crabs, and herbs.⁷⁶ In utter hopelessness he sat down in a lonely spot within sight of the mouldering walls of Reading Abbey and there resigned himself to complete despair. Finally, on September 6, 1737, in the church of his baptism, as the words of the psalm were being read, "Great are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all," he wrote, "I was overwhelmed with joy, and I believed there was mercy. My heart danced for joy and my dying soul revived."⁷⁷

The first of the Oxford Methodists that he met was Charles Kinchin whom he first heard of as "a stupid, religious fellow in Oxford." The story of his journey to Oxford and his interview with Kinchin is very interesting, but space forbids its inclusion here.⁷⁸ He and Kinchin became fast friends and

⁷⁶ Luke Tyerman, op. cit., vol. I, p. 274.

⁷⁷ John Wesley, Journal, II, p. 150n.

⁷⁸ Loc. cit., also see J. E. Hutton, op. cit., p. 318.

as has already been pointed out, it was through him that Cennick was introduced to John Wesley.

A week before Wesley came to Reading John Cennick had organized a Religious Society there. The local minister, however, was determined that there should be no such society in his parish, and set out to destroy it. That first evening several of the members met with Wesley and were greatly strengthened and comforted. The next day, accompanied by Cennick, Wesley set out for Dummer. After preaching there and at Basingstoke, they returned to Reading together on March 12th. It was during this trip that they (really) became acquainted and a strong bond of affection immediately sprang up between them. Upon their return, they expected to meet again with the new society, but the hostile clergyman had been at work visiting every member of the group personally and had either by persuasion or by threats scattered them beyond recall.⁷⁹

On May 14, 1739, John Cennick says:

I came to London and was received into the Society in Fetter Lane, together with my sister, Sally Cennick, and Kezia Wilmott. Here I heard of the awakening in Bristol and Kingswood, and felt an inexpressible desire to see it. I asked the Brethren if I might not have leave to visit Bristol, &c. Mr. Whitfield told me both his design of building a school for the colliers' children, and also wished I would go and be one of the masters. He wrote of the same to Mr. John Wesley (who knew me some time before

Mr. Whitefield came from Georgia), and I received a pressing letter for me to come to him. I consented with all my heart; and after I had settled my affairs in Reading, I took leave of my relatives and went to Bristol.⁸⁰

On June 11th he set out for Bristol in a downpour of rain and slept that night in a barn along the way. He reached Bristol on the twelfth, the day that Wesley left in haste for London to face new troubles in the Fetter Lane Society. But before his departure, Wesley had left word that Cennick was to be received "as his own self;" and according to Cennick's own report, they ". . . received us kindly." Two days later found this zealous young man launched upon a new career. Of that momentous day, June 14, 1739, he writes at length:

I, Mr. Purdy, Ferne, Tommy Ostfield, and Mrs. Norman of Bristol walked three miles to Kingswood to see the colliers, and by the way I had an opportunity to relate all my experience, which afterwards opened a door for my preaching. In the afternoon, Sammy Wathen, an apprentice to a surgeon in Corn Street, and a chief member of the Baldwin Street Society, had begun to visit the colliers and to read to them, and was to have come about 3 or 4 o'clock, but as he stayed later than ordinary, and the people were a little impatient, my company earnestly entreated me to expound a chapter or else speak to the souls. I was sensible of the Divine call in my heart, beside the open door before me, but as I had never done such a thing and my conscience was exceedingly tender, I delayed, though persuaded on all sides, till Mr. Wathen came, who joined with the others to entreat me to preach. We went aside into a little cottage near where the foundation of the new school was laid, and there we kneeled down simply and asked our Saviour to make manifest His mind, and when we had done one wrote several lots which we cast before the Lord, and I drew out "To respond." I stood under a sycamore tree and spoke to several hundreds with a boldness

⁸⁰ John Cennick, An Account of the Most Remarkable Occurrences In The Awakenings At Bristol and Kingswood Till The Brethren's Labours began there in 1746, W. H. S. Proceedings, vol. VI, p. 105.

and particular freedom in my heart with a blessing and afterwards returned to town.⁸¹

This is Cennick's own account of his first hesitant, yet triumphant, step into lay preaching. But once that initial step was taken, the opportunities multiplied; and he gave himself unstintedly to the work. He says:

My preaching was noised over all Kingswood and Bristol so that I could not avoid preaching again in Kingswood at White's Hill on the morrow, and at Nicholas Street Society. From this time I preached in many places and was universally received, but did not appear like a minister, still wearing either a dark coloured coat or else a very light one. At this time the awakening spread exceedingly, and for about a year after, all places where we came received the Gospel joyfully, especially Bedminster, Bath, Bradford, Pensford, Busselton, Keinsham, Kendalshire, Upton, Downing, Stapleton, Hambrook, etc.⁸²

Upon Wesley's return to Bristol he could not avoid hearing the talk about the preaching of the new young prophet, John Cennick. There were some who objected to such irregularity and urged him to put a stop to it at once. But, surprisingly enough, instead of objecting or even of offering a word of caution, Wesley encouraged and counseled him in his new work. Cennick continued to preach in Kingswood and Bristol for the next eighteen months under the direction of Wesley and often supplied Wesley's place during his enforced absences.

In spite of his lack of university training, Cennick was not illiterate, but was considered by both Wesley and

⁸¹ John Cennick, op. cit., pp. 106-107.

⁸² Ibid., p. 107.

Whitefield to be a worthy master for their new school at Kingswood. He was a young man of many natural gifts. He was a thorough and competent teacher and during his later career prepared several small manuals on theology, a "Treatise on the Holy Ghost," an "Exhortation to Steadfastness," a "Short Catechism for the Instruction of Youth." Of these J. E. Hutton says:

I have read them carefully; and have come to the conclusion that though Cennick was neither a learned theologian nor an original religious thinker, he was fairly well up in his subject. For example, in his "Short Catechism" he shows a ready knowledge of the Bible and a clear understanding of the evangelical position; and in his "Treatise on the Holy Ghost" he quotes at length, not only from the Scriptures and the Prayer-book, but also from Augustine, Athanasius, Tertullian, Chrysostom, Calvin, Luther, Ridley, Hooper, and other Church Fathers and Protestant Divines.⁸³

He also wrote several volumes of hymns some of which are still sung and cherished; "Be Present At Our Table, Lord," "Children Of The Heavenly King," "Ere I sleep, For Every Favour," "Lo! He comes with Clouds Descending," are but a few. Cennick was more than a popular preacher. Multitudes crowded to hear him, and many hundreds found new life under the power of his preaching.

Soon, however, Cennick began to embrace the doctrines of Calvinism. The unhappy rupture between him and Wesley and the disastrous separation within the Kingswood Society that resulted form a sad chapter in the life of all concerned. The

⁸³ J. E. Hutton, op. cit., p. 321.

final separation between the two friends and the division of the Kingswood Society took place in March, 1741, amidst much bitterness and many harsh words. The separation, however, did not prevent subsequent friendly intercourse between them as is clearly shown by Wesley's Diary. Later Wesley read a volume of Cennick's hymns and helped him prepare them for the press.⁸⁴ Cennick soon aligned himself with George Whitefield and became one of his principal helpers in London. But again differences arose and he withdrew from him to unite with the Moravians in 1745. Within their fellowship, Cennick remained until his death in 1755.

It was one thing for Wesley to accept the help of Charles Delamotte as a lay preacher in far-off Georgia. It was another thing altogether for him to accept the help of John Cennick in Kingswood and Bristol--to accept the preaching of an unqualified man in a parish of the Church of England. At that time, Wesley was also counselling Howell Harris, the lay evangelist of Wales, and heartily approving of his work and warmly welcoming him as a fellow-laborer. Wesley's ideas on lay preaching had definitely developed since his Georgia days and even since his days in Germany. His experience with the Moravians in Germany, especially with Christian David, and the pressing demands of the present situation were all part of the answer to the development within Wesley's mind

⁸⁴ John Wesley, Journal, II, p. 434.

that was rapidly moving toward the full and open acceptance of lay preaching.

On Thursday, September 9, 1790, within a few months of his death, John Wesley wrote, "I read over the experience of Joseph Humphreys, the first lay preacher that assisted me in England in the year 1738."⁸⁵ This statement has been generally accepted by most Methodist historians as being true. The editor of the Journal in a note says of Joseph Humphreys, "He was employed by Wesley as a sort of Moravian lay preacher as early as 1738, and was greatly attached to him. At this time (June 19, 1740) he was acting as a Moravian minister at Deptford."⁸⁶ Even Simon in his very learned five volumes on Wesley and Methodism assumes the validity of Wesley's statement and dating.⁸⁷ Tyerman in 1884 published an article in the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine entitled, "Leaves of an Over-looked Chapter in Methodist History; or Wesley's (Reputed) 'First Lay-Preacher,'" which has been largely ignored or overlooked by all subsequent writers.⁸⁸ This article is mainly an abridgement of Joseph Humphreys' autobiography entitled, An Account Of Joseph Humphreys' Experience Of The Work Of Grace Upon His Heart.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ John Wesley, Journal, VIII, p. 93.

⁸⁶ Ibid., II, p. 352n.

⁸⁷ John Simon, Religious Societies, p. 309

⁸⁹ Bristol: Printed by Felix Farley, 1742, 44pp.

⁸⁸ Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, vol. CVII, 1884, Feb. pp. 90-99, March, pp. 193-201, April, pp. 277-285.

However, a few remarks in Tyerman's introduction are tremendously important. He says of this September 9, 1790, entry in Wesley's Journal:

There are two errors in this brief entry. 1. John Cennick, not Joseph Humphreys, was the "first lay-preacher" that assisted Wesley. 2. Joseph Humphreys did not begin to assist Wesley in 1738, but in 1740. Remembering that Wesley was in the eighty-eighth year of his age when he penned the foregoing sentence, it is not difficult to account for its double mistake.⁹⁰

Following this with a few introductory comments about Joseph's father, Tyerman then gives a slightly abridged edition of the autobiography as sufficient evidence in itself to bear out his contention. He does not extract and organize those salient facts that really make his case. The result has been that nearly everyone has attributed Tyerman's judgement to his "declining years" and discounted it without even reading Humphreys' autobiography. A careful reading of this forty-four page tract and a comparison of all the facts inevitably bring one to a part of Tyerman's conclusion, (1) that Wesley was incorrect in recording this entry, (2) that Joseph Humphreys was not the first lay preacher who assisted Wesley, and (3) that Joseph Humphreys did not begin to help him in 1738. Whether or not John Cennick was the first lay preacher who assisted Wesley, as Tyerman maintains, will be dealt with later. Just when Joseph Humphreys began to assist Wesley, if

⁹⁰ Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, 1884, p. 90.

not in 1738, will be one of the immediate points at issue. The task now is to choose and organize those facts that bear on these contentions.

It must be remembered that by September of 1790 Wesley was a weak and infirm man. On the first of January of that year he wrote, "I am now an old man, decayed from head to foot."⁹¹ Simon says, ". . . throughout the year we find signs of growing feebleness. . . . Sometimes there were lapses of memory in public, sometimes he failed to see the print either of his Bible or hymn-book."⁹² On September 15th Wesley wrote to Squire Brackenbury, "My body seems nearly to have done its work and to be almost worn out."⁹³ His Journal stopped altogether in October of that year. Under these circumstances it certainly seems legitimate to question the accuracy of the Journal entry on September 9, 1790, about an event that happened fifty-odd year before, especially when that entry contradicts other statements of Wesley and of contemporaries writing much closer to the event.

The facts from the autobiography show that Joseph Humphreys was born at Burford in Oxfordshire on October 28,

⁹¹ John Wesley, Journal, VIII, p. 35.

⁹² John Simon, John Wesley: The Last Phase, p. 332.

⁹³ John Wesley, Letters, VIII, p. 237, 1790.)

1720.⁹⁴ His father was minister of a Dissenting Church in Burford for nearly thirty years, "a church which," to use the words of his son, "he himself had been chiefly instrumental in gathering and converting to the Lord."⁹⁵ Upon the death of his father in 1731, Joseph was taken to London by a "kind friend" and placed in a Dissenting Academy. There he acquitted himself admirably as a student but grew gravely concerned about his religious life. "I was now between twelve and thirteen," he says, "and I had a more than ordinary desire to be a Minister. I used to write sermons of my own composing, thundering exceedingly against all unrepenting sinners."⁹⁶

When Joseph was about fifteen, his tutor was changed and the academy was moved to Deptford and became known as the Deptford Academy, a school for the training of Dissenting ministers. Soon after going there Joseph began to despair of his own sinful nature and to question his call to the ministry.

. . . I could not conceive that I should ever be fit to be a minister. I thought sometime or other I should certainly prove a scandal to my profession. One while, I was determined to quit the academy privately, and go into the popish countries; and I thought if I could but get a salary for life, I would be content always to live in their monasteries.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine gives the year as 1722. This is obviously a misprint. Internal evidence and L. Tyerman, The Life Of George Whitefield, vol. I, p. 223, show the date to be 1720.

⁹⁵ Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, CVII, p. 91.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 92.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 94.

Escaping from this temptation, he says, "When I was about seventeen years of age, I seemed more resolved for seriousness than ever. . . . I joined Dr. Guyse's Congregational Church in London, hoping that thereby I should find rest in my mind."⁹⁸ The record of his first effort at preaching must be given in his own words:

It was the custom of our academy to have a vacation every year, at which time the pupils dispersed into their respective counties. Accordingly the following summer (1738), I went into Oxfordshire to my native town. No minister being there, and I being designed for the ministry, the people insisted upon my preaching to them. I declined doing this the first Sabbath-day, but yielded to their importunity the next, which was June 18, 1738, on which day I preached my first sermon, from Jer. l. 6, 7: "Then said I, Ah, Lord God; behold, I cannot speak; for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak."

After this, I discoursed several times in a private house; and, when I was coming away, several, especially young ones, testified that they had received great benefit. I desired them to give the glory to God, and to take heed of stifling their convictions. . . . I had sweet communion with one Mrs. Cl ke, an experimental woman of that town, which was searching and useful to me; and I remember a remarkable expression of mine to her at that time. I said I wanted to preach to such congregations as afterwards I found those of the Methodists to be, though when I spoke to her I had never heard of the Methodists.⁹⁹

Returning to the Deptford Academy in the fall, Joseph continued his work as a student. In the spring of the next year he began to hear,

⁹⁸ Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, CVII, p. 95

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 96.

. . . great talk of Mr. Whitefield; and on May 2, 1739, I went to hear him on Kennington Common. I liked him because he so affectionately invited poor guilty sinners to come to Jesus Christ by faith. Afterwards I heard him several times; I felt the power of the Lord to be with him. . . . I earnestly sought his acquaintance, and could not be easy until I had been in his company. Accordingly, one evening I supped with him and Mr. Howell Harris of Wales, and several more brethren. . . .

June 8th, 1739, our vacation coming on, I went into the country. . . . I was now with Mrs. Clarke at Burford, and this summer, as I had last, I preached to the country people, and testified the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to all that came. I found now also in my sermons that I had liberty to enlarge more than I had written down.¹⁰⁰

This was the beginning of his extempore preaching. There is little doubt that his preaching during the summer of 1739 reflected much of the doctrine and spirit of Whitefield whom he had heard and had so greatly admired. After his return to Deptford he said:

. . . I found people wonderfully moved by Mr. Whitefield's preaching upon Blackheath. . . . I proposed the setting up of a Society, to sing and pray together; and several approved. I thought it proper, however, to advise with the Rev. Mr. Whitefield and dear Mr. Seward (now deceased) about it. . . . However, on August 8th, 1739, after prayer for direction, the Society was set on foot. We had a large dancing-room convenient for the purpose. Mr. Seward was with me, and several were present. We prayed and sang hymns. At first I only read Mr. Whitefield's sermons to the people; but afterwards I could not help giving short exhortations, when the reading was ended. . . . the number increased, till several hundreds attended, and many on the Sabbath days were always obliged to go away, the room not being large enough to contain them. We generally used to meet twice a week, sometimes oftener. One hundred and forty men and women gave in their names, with a desire to be of the Society, and in order to be instructed in the ways of God. I had great encouragement, and my

¹⁰⁰ Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, CVII, p. 97.

call seemed clear. Many were awakened so far as to de-
sire the sincere milk of the word. Mr. Whitefield was
gone, (to America) and no one was inclined to dispense
it to them but myself.¹⁰¹

This he zealously did. But on December 25, 1739, Humphreys
was expelled from the academy for such "enthusiastic" activi-
ties. The Deptford Society was organized as a result of
Whitefield's labors and with his approval and support. How-
ever, as Tyerman says, ". . . it soon became Wesley's Society,
and to the end of his life he visited it."¹⁰² At just what
time this society came under the supervision of Wesley is
difficult to say with absolute certitude. But Tyerman sug-
gests that Wesley probably visited the society ~~almost~~ within
~~a month~~ ^{seven weeks} after it was formed.¹⁰³ In the Journal under September
27, 1739, Wesley says, "I went in the afternoon to a society
at Deptford. . . ." The Diary under the same date says,
"3 Deptford, singing, etc."¹⁰⁴ That was Wesley's first re-
corded visit to a Deptford society; and there is no evidence
of any other society being there at that time. Humphreys says
it was through Whitefield that he met John Wesley. Therefore,
before Whitefield sailed for America on August 14, 1739,¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, CVII, p. 98.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 196. .

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 98.

¹⁰⁴ John Wesley, Journal, II, p. 282.

¹⁰⁵ Luke Tyerman, Life of Whitefield, vol. I, p. 308.

only a few days after the formation of the new society, he probably told Wesley about the group, introduced him to young Humphreys, and asked him to give the society his counsel and guidance which Wesley proceeded to do.¹⁰⁶

Soon after his expulsion from Deptford Academy, Humphreys says, I ". . . entered upon another foundation at Mr. J. Eames's Academy in Moorfields, London, where I had liberty to pursue my studies, and to attend upon the Methodist Societies."¹⁰⁷ He writes about the Wesleys:

I had now an intimate acquaintance with the Revs. Mr. John and Charles Wesley. I was first recommended to them by the Rev. Mr. Whitefield; and I had heard them preach, and found great love to them. In some points, indeed, I differed from them, but thought the difference was more about words than in substance. However, at that time, all controversial points were let alone, and Christ only was preached. . . .

On September 1st, 1740, I began to preach at the Foundery, in London, to Mr. Wesley's congregation. Many a powerful opportunity there was. In the private Society, we had many sweet meetings. I had a peculiar love to many of those people; I should have been glad to have served them in the Gospel to this day had the door continued open. At this time, also, I had a very great intimacy with the Rev. Mr. John Wesley. We were together almost continually night and day. But on account of some peculiar and important doctrines of grace wherein we differed, I was, on April 25th, 1741, obliged to separate from him, fearing, if I continued with him, I should, from the respect I had to him, be influenced to speak any thing touching these doctrines contrary to the real sentiments of my own mind. I found this had been somewhat of a snare to me, and therefore, I felt it my duty to extricate myself.

¹⁰⁶ It was first Whitefield's society and then Wesley's, though at that time the distinction was not real because they were still in union with one another. It was certainly not a Moravian Society as Curnock suggests in the Journal, II, p. 352n.

¹⁰⁷ Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, CVII, p. 196 and 277.

. . . beside my private conversation and public preaching at the Foundery and at Deptford, I also laboured almost daily, for a twelvemonth, at various Societies; at Wapping, Greyhound Lane, Rosemary Lane, Spitalfields, Redriffe, Long Lane in Southwark, and Short's Garden; I also sometimes visited Oxfordshire and parts of Gloucestershire, where numbers attended in the fields. I likewise visited Mr. Wesley's congregations at Bristol and Kingswood twice, where I became acquainted with Bro. Cennick, with whom I had sweet communion. In short, my whole delight was in the ways of the Lord. I could not endure to be idle for a minute.¹⁰⁸

Humphreys left Wesley and joined Whitefield who eagerly accepted his services at the beginning of May 1741. This was soon after Whitefield's return from his second visit to America, and his painful rupture with Wesley. Humphreys parted from Wesley with great affection and genuine regrets. In a letter dated April 5, 1741, he says: "Rev. and Dear Sir;--I think I love you better than ever, I would not grieve you by any means, if I could possibly help it. . . ."¹⁰⁹

In turn, Wesley greatly valued Humphreys' friendship and lamented losing his help in the work. Five years after their parting he says, "I spent an agreeable hour with our old fellow labourer; Mr. (Joseph) Humphreys. I found him open and friendly, but vigorously tenacious of the Unconditional Decrees. O that opinions should separate chief friends! This is bigotry all over."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, CVII, p. 278.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., appendix, p. 279.

¹¹⁰ John Wesley, Journal, III, p. 238.

Humphreys was a man of considerable learning and became one of the early masters at Kingswood School. On January 5, 1743, he joined with Whitefield, Rowlands, Powell, Williams, Howell Harris, and John Cennick in formally organizing Welsh Calvinistic Methodism.¹¹¹ Little is known definitely about his later life. Wesley says:

Afterwards he turned Calvinist, and joined Mr. Whitefield, and published an invective against my brother and me in the newspaper.¹¹² In a while he renounced Mr. Whitefield, and was ordained a Presbyterian minister. At last he received Episcopal ordination. He then scoffed at inward religion, and, when reminded of his own experience, replied, "that was one of the foolish things which I wrote in the time of my madness!"¹¹³

From this brief survey of the life of Joseph Humphreys, it becomes quite evident that: (1) he did not begin to assist Wesley in the year 1738, but possibly in September, 1739, and certainly by September 1, 1740; (2) both Delamotte and Cennick began to assist Wesley as lay preachers before Humphreys; (3) Joseph Humphreys was neither a Moravian nor minister to a Moravian Society. The following facts taken from the autobiography and other sources are submitted in support of these contentions.

¹¹¹ Luke Tyerman, Life of Wesley, vol. I, pp. 402-403.

¹¹² The invective, not a bitter one, was in the form of a letter to Wesley, sent to the Weekly History by Whitefield, with a request that it might also appear in the Daily Advertiser.

¹¹³ John Wesley, Journal, VIII, p. 93.

The first time that Joseph Humphreys preached was in the summer of 1738, a few months before his eighteenth birthday. At that time he says he preached one Sunday in a Dissenting church and, "After this, I discoursed several times in a private house. . . ." He then went back to school during the fall and lamented the fact that he fell into outward sin and did not live as honorably as he did while preaching in Oxfordshire. But the important thing to remember about his first summer's preaching experience is his comment, ". . . I had never heard of the Methodists." The first of the "so-called Methodists" Joseph did hear was George Whitefield on May 2, 1739. During the following weeks he attended his preaching and conversed with him several times. There is little doubt that ^{Humphreys}~~Gennick~~ was greatly moved by this association and during the ensuing summer reflected Whitefield's doctrine and spirit in his own preaching. In August Joseph definitely became a disciple of Whitefield by organizing a society in Deptford with the famous preacher's counsel and guidance.

Humphreys says, "I was first recommended to them (the Wesleys) by the Rev. Mr. Whitefield. . . ." Knowing that Whitefield did not meet Joseph before May, 1739, and that he sailed for America on August 14th, the "recommendation" must have taken place during those few weeks that intervened. Therefore, the conjecture made on pages 103 and 104 is still

a strong possibility if not a probability. Humphreys does not speak of having an "intimate acquaintance" with the Wesleys, however, until he came to the new academy in Moorfields early in 1740. Even then he was but a lad just past nineteen; and when he first preached in the Foundery on September 1, 1740, he lacked almost two months of reaching his twentieth birthday. William Myles in his list of "The First Race of Methodist Preachers" places the beginning of Joseph Humphreys' ministry as 1740.¹¹⁴ In light of these facts, therefore, Wesley was certainly wrong when he said that Humphreys began to assist him in 1738. It could have been no earlier than the fall of 1739, and that actually might have been the time about which Wesley was thinking. But, it is known with certainty that Humphreys was assisting Wesley as a lay preacher in September of 1740; and, therefore, both Delamotte and Cennick were assistants before Humphreys.

Throughout the autobiography, Joseph never once mentions the Moravians. He speaks of being a Dissenter, of joining a Congregational Church in London, and of his union with the Methodists; but according to his record, there is no evidence of his association with the Moravians in even as close a relationship as John Wesley had. Certainly, he was not a

¹¹⁴ William Myles, A Chronological History Of The People Called Methodists, p. 447.

Moravian minister during the early part of his life for which there is a record. Where Curnock and others obtained their information about Humphreys being a Moravian minister in Deptford is a mystery.

Wesley's warm regard for Humphreys and use of him as one of his first lay preachers, however, is indeed remarkable. Humphreys was a youth under the age of twenty-one, an avowed Dissenter who had been trained in a Dissenting Academy for the Dissenting ministry. This was a strange appointment, especially in light of Wesley's loyalty to the Church and his insistence that all in fellowship with him attend its ordinances. But Wesley's opinions were changing with his work. He was coming to the position that there is no wrong way to make a Christian--the principal thing was to win souls to Christ. Dissenters sometimes proved as effective in that important work as members of his own beloved church.

The next step in Wesley's developing ideas on lay preaching was his employment of Thomas Maxfield at the Foundery in London. Not a great deal is known about Maxfield's early life. The first time he is mentioned by Wesley in the Journal is ~~as he describes~~ ^{in connection with} a revival scene during which Maxfield was converted:

In the evening I was interrupted at Nicholas Street, almost as soon as I had begun to speak, by the cries of one who was 'pricked at the heart,' and strongly groaned for pardon and peace. . . a young man who stood up behind fixed his eyes on him, and sunk down himself as one dead; but

soon began to roar out and beat himself against the ground, so that six men could scarcely hold him. His name was Thomas Maxfield.¹¹⁵

Soon afterwards he entered into a deep religious experience. The next reference to Maxfield is a very interesting entry in the Diary which says that on the night of Thursday, August 3, 1739, Wesley visited "Bro. Maxfield's Band" which indicates that at that time he was a Band leader in Bristol.¹¹⁶ The next reference to Maxfield is in London on March 26, 1741. Many things happened during those two years, however, that are not recorded in the Journal. Just when he went up from Bristol to London after his conversion is not clear. It is possible that he went to London at the specific request of John Wesley. Knowing the success that John Cennick had experienced in and around Bristol, appreciating Maxfield's talents as a Band leader, and recognizing the fact (of human psychology) that one from without the society could command more respect and exert greater control than one from within, Wesley probably sent for Maxfield to come to London at once with a definite plan for him in mind. The official biographers of Wesley¹¹⁷ record the fact that when Wesley ". . . was about to leave London for a season, he appointed one whom he

¹¹⁵ John Wesley, Journal, II, p. 203, May 20, 1739.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 252.

¹¹⁷ Thomas Coke and Henry Moore.

judged to be strong in faith, and of an exemplary conversation, to meet the Society at the usual times, to pray with them, and give them such advice as might be needful."¹¹⁸

Maxfield took up the task with the fervor of a zealot. He carried out his appointed duties with meticulous care, but being a man with imagination he did more than was required of him. For the benefit of those who had been entrusted to his care, he began to expound and elaborate upon the Scriptures. He evidently had a very special gift as an expositor. The Countess of Huntingdon, after hearing Maxfield upon more than one occasion, wrote the following letter to John Wesley:

I never mentioned to you, that I have seen Maxfield. He is one of the greatest instances of God's peculiar favour, that I know. God has raised from the stones, one to sit among the princes of his people.--He is my astonishment.--How is God's power shewn in weakness. You can have no idea what an attachment I have to him. He is highly favoured of the Lord. The first time I made him expound, expecting little from him, I sat over against him, and thought, what a power of God must be with him, to make me give my attention to him. But before he had gone over one fifth part, any one that had seen me, would have thought me made of wood or stone, so quite immoveable, I both felt and looked. His power in prayer is very extraordinary. To deal plainly, I could talk for an hour about him. The Society goes on well here. Live assured of the most faithful and sincere friendship of your unworthy sister in Christ Jesus.

Selina Huntingdon.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Thomas Coke and Henry Moore, The Life of The Rev. John Wesley, A. M., p. 219.

¹¹⁹ Joseph Benson, An Apology For The People Called Methodists, pp. 141-142.

To this glowing report of Maxfield, Coke and Moore add this account:

This young man, being fervent in spirit, and mighty in the Scriptures, greatly profited the people. They crowded to hear him: and by the increase of their number, as well as by their earnest and deep attention, they insensibly led him to go further than he at first designed. He began to preach: and the Lord so blessed the word, that many were not only deeply awakened and brought to repentance, but were also made happy in a consciousness of pardon. The Scripture-marks of true conversion, inward peace and power to walk in all holiness, evinced the work to be of God. ¹²⁰

The line of demarcation between "expounding" and "preaching" is very fine. To step from the former over into the latter was inevitable for an impassioned speaker. But once the step was taken and such influential and ardent admirers as Lady Huntingdon continued to encourage and support him in his newly found vocation, it is not surprising that Maxfield soon began to preach to greater audiences in the main room of the Foundery. Though many were helped and the crowds increased, it is certain that some of the society found his preaching "highly irregular." Soon a formal letter of protest was dispatched to Wesley in which he was requested to stop such practices at once. Upon receiving the letter, Wesley set out for London in haste to investigate the matter. Here the, now famous, story continues:

¹²⁰ Coke and Moore, op. cit., pp. 219-220.

His mother then lived in his house, adjoining to the Foundery. When he arrived, she perceived that his countenance was expressive of dissatisfaction, and inquired the cause. "Thomas Maxfield," said he abruptly, "has turned Preacher, I find." She looked attentively at him and replied, "John, you know what my sentiments have been. You cannot suspect me of favouring readily any thing of this kind. But take care what you do with respect to that young man, for he is as surely called of God to preach, as you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching: and hear him also yourself." He did so. His prejudice bowed before the force of truth: and he could only say, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good."¹²¹

In light of Wesley's previous association with Delamotte, Cennick, Humphreys, and Howell Harris, is it not difficult to give credence to this story? Why should he have been so shocked at the fact of Maxfield's preaching? Had he not directed Delamotte in the work? Had he not encouraged Cennick to continue against formal complaint?

The story as told is essentially true; and the reasons for Wesley's anxiety are twofold. First, neither Wesley nor Maxfield had planned that he should preach during his absence. Wesley had given him instructions, "to meet the Society at the

¹²¹ Almost every historian of the movement retells this story about Thomas Maxfield, and no one seems to know upon what foundation it rests. Richard Green quotes the story from Henry Moore's The Life Of The Reverend John Wesley, A. M. (New York: N. Bangs & J. Emory, 1826, 2 vols.) and says of Moore, he was ". . . Wesley's intimate friend, biographer and last surviving trustee." (John Wesley: Evangelist, p. 293). However, Moore took the story almost verbatim from the work that he and Dr. Thomas Coke had written in 1792 as quoted above (op. cit., pp. 219-220). This seems to be the earliest recorded version. Evidently the only foundation for the story is oral tradition finally set down by these two intimates of Wesley's later life. In its present form the story is probably essentially true. Certainly, Wesley was familiar with it in the form Coke and Moore told it and would surely have denied or corrected it long before his death.

usual times, to pray with them, and give them such advice as might be needful."¹²² This commission Maxfield had accepted. He assumed the authority to preach without either instruction or permission. Second, Wesley had strong memories of the serious disturbances that Bowers had caused and was still causing in the Fetter Lane Society in London by his irresponsible outbursts of so-called "preaching." Bowers was also fresh in the memories of many others. Wesley was concerned lest another "Bowers" might begin his disrupting harangues. He did not want a similar fate to befall his new society and was determined to stop it at once.

Undoubtedly, Wesley had been giving the matter of lay preachers serious thought in recent months. Since he had accepted the services of Cennick in Bristol only a few months before, he must have been made keenly aware again of the possibilities of using talented laymen in the work. But he had not yet come to a definite decision about the general use of laymen as preachers. All of his love for church order and regularity rebelled against the institutionalizing of lay preaching. Wesley's avowed principle always was, "I submit to every ordinance of man wherever I do not conceive there is an absolute necessity for acting contrary to it."¹²³ Wesley

¹²² Coke and Moore, op. cit., p. 219.

¹²³ John Wesley, Letters, III, p. 186.

never had been averse to using laymen as assistants when the exigencies of the moment demanded, as has been clearly shown. He was never afraid of a new departure if that new departure was in the right direction. The truth was, he was not yet fully convinced of the "absolute necessity" of using lay preachers in other than isolated instances.

As Wesley hurried back to London, as he heard his mother's mature advice, as he listened to Maxfield preach, he was passing through a crisis. It was a time of decision in his life and in the history of Methodism. In that hour he took a stand from which he never withdrew. In that hour he made a decision that tremendously affected the future of the revival of religion in the land. If Wesley had not accepted the services of lay preachers, trained and organized them, and sent them out in the power of God, the revival would have been a local affair and would never have reached to the remotest corners of Britain and to the far side of the Atlantic before death carried him into the world beyond. Wesley, who would rather have done almost anything than separate from the Church of England, wrote many years later, ". . . if we cannot stop a separation without stopping lay preachers, the case is clear--we cannot stop it at all."¹²⁴ To have stopped the lay preachers would have put an end to the revival.

¹²⁴ John Wesley, Letters, III, p. 146.

It is safe to assume that Wesley's final decision for lay preaching was made in that hour. After the service he had an interview with Maxfield who expressed a desire to give all of his time and effort to help him as "a son in the gospel," and to labor when and where he should direct. On these terms he was accepted and permitted to preach. Writing later of the event, Wesley says, ". . . a young man, named Thomas Maxfield, came and desired to help me as a son in the gospel. Soon after came a second, Thomas Richards; and then a third, Thomas Westell. These severally desired to serve me as sons, and to labour when and where I should direct. . . . I durst not refuse their assistance. And here commenced my power, to appoint each of these when and where, and how to labour, that is while he chose to continue with me." Wesley seems here to count this as the true beginning of lay preaching as a Methodist institution. By making Thomas Richards "second," he implies that Maxfield was "first." And he also says "here commenced my power to appoint" which implies a new relationship from that of Cennick and those who went before. This adds to the claim that with Maxfield Methodist lay preaching truly began.

¹²⁵ John Wesley, Works, VIII, pp. 311-312.

The exact date when Maxfield first preached at the Foundery is still undetermined. Wesley wrote in 1763, "Mr. Maxfield was justified while I was praying with him in Baldwin Street, Bristol. Not long after he was employed by me as a preacher in London."¹²⁶ The date of justification is known to have been May 20, 1739.¹²⁷ But how many weeks or months are involved in "not long after" is difficult to say. Lecky says that Maxfield first preached officially in 1741;¹²⁸ Eayrs in A New History Of Methodism says it was at the end of 1739;¹²⁹ Myles thinks that Maxfield, Richards, and Westell were all employed by Wesley in the beginning of 1740.¹³⁰ Most of the later historians have accepted Myles' conjecture. The Journal which is usually the most helpful in these matters is absolutely silent about Maxfield between the reference to his Band in Bristol (in the Diary) and March 26, 1741.¹³¹ The case must simply be built upon other evidence.

It is known that the Foundery did not come into Wesley's possession before November, 1739, and that the new Methodist

¹²⁶ John Wesley, Journal, V, pp. 10-11, March 23, 1763.

¹²⁷ See pages 109-110.

¹²⁸ W. E. H. Lecky, op. cit., vol. III, pp. 70-71.

¹²⁹ A New History Of Methodism, vol. I, p. 292.

¹³⁰ William Myles, op. cit., p. 15.

¹³¹ John Wesley, Journal, II, p. 438.

Society was not formed until about that time. It is also known that Susanna Wesley was residing there at the time of the Maxfield episode. The question naturally arises, when did she go there to live? Eliza Clarke and John Simon say in December, 1739, basing their conclusion upon a letter in the Colman Collection at the Methodist Book Room written by Mrs. Wesley and headed, "Foundery, December 27, 1739."¹³² The Reverend Frank Baker has called attention to the fact that both Clarke and Simon are in error here and that actually "Foundery" has been misread for "Thursday."¹³³ He goes on to say:

From internal evidence the letter may have been written at the Foundery; on the other hand, it may have been written from other lodgings in London. Samuel Wesley had died on November 6th, so that she might have come to London in either November or December. Certainly, she was settled in the Foundery by June, 1740, when Charles Wesley wrote to his brother there, sending "Duty to my m(other)." I have a photostat of another letter of Charles Wesley's (from Emory University dated apparently April 16, 1740, where he says to Mr. Samuel Wesley: "My Mother, blessed be God, is settled to her Satisfaction, in Lodgings we have fitted up for her in Our House; yt is, My Brother's - & mine." This letter was written from "The Foundery."¹³⁴

The whole matter is still obscure, but at present the first months of 1740 seem to be quite certain as the time of Mrs. Wesley's arrival at the Foundery and, therefore, of Maxfield's first preaching. Myles' conjecture seems nearest the truth. With material now available, more specific dating is impossible.

¹³² John Simon, The Methodist Societies, p. 12; Eliza Clarke, Susanna Wesley, p. 201.

¹³³ Frank Baker, B.A. B.D., Registrar of the W.H.S. in a letter to the writer dated April 8, 1948.

¹³⁴ Loc. cit.

Maxfield was a very gifted assistant whose labors among the Methodists were blessed with great success for over twenty years. Greatly respected by the members of the societies, he was also highly esteemed by Wesley who loved him as a son. His personal charm and graciousness endeared him to all. Lady Huntingdon who encouraged him in his early ministry and was his friend through life, has already attested to his power as a preacher.¹³⁵ A few years later Maxfield, upon the special recommendation of John Wesley, was ordained by the Bishop of Derry who was in Bath at the time for his health.¹³⁶ During his stay there, the bishop came into contact with the ministry of Wesley and those associated with him. At Maxfield's ordination he said, "Mr. Maxfield, I ordain you to assist that good man (John Wesley), that he may not work himself to death."¹³⁷

Maxfield served faithfully and well for a number of years but later became enamoured with a group of fanatics that saw visions and had dreams or impressions they thought to be from God. At first Maxfield^{only} encouraged them but later joined them. Wesley remonstrated^{with} him and defended him; but it is a tragic fact that Maxfield became ambitious and began

¹³⁵ See page 111.

¹³⁶ The Life And Times Of Selina Countess of Huntingdon, vol. I, p. 33.

¹³⁷ John Wesley, Journal, V, p. 11.

to feel his growing importance.¹³⁸ It was a great personal blow to Wesley when Maxfield severed all relations with him. It severely injured the London Society when he carried away two hundred¹³⁹ of its members. The final separation took place on April 28, 1763,¹⁴⁰ amidst much hard feeling and bitterness. Wesley says:

From this time he spoke all manner of evil of me, his father, his friend, his greatest earthly benefactor. . . . Indeed, a flood of calumny and evil-speaking was poured out on every side.¹⁴¹

Wesley was so deeply affected by the separation with all of its accompanying unpleasantness that he feelingly and with tears preached from that text, "If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." But never once did he falter. "My point," he said, "was still to go straight forward in the work whereto I am called."¹⁴²

Maxfield was selected as minister of the society in Snowfields and a few years later moved to Ropemakers' Alley, Moorfields, where he attracted a large following. Finally, he went to Princes Street, Moorfields, in about 1767. Through his charming manner and sincere approach to all that he undertook, he was able to attach the people to him with a

¹³⁸ Philip H. Lee, "Thomas Maxfield," WHS Proceedings, XXI, September 1938, p. 161.

¹³⁹ Luke Tyerman, op. cit., vol. II, p. 441.

¹⁴⁰ Philip H. Lee, op. cit., p. 161.

¹⁴¹ John Wesley, Journal, V., p. 13.

¹⁴² Loc. cit.

tenacious devotion.

The warm-hearted Wesley always hoped to establish a reunion, but this was never fully accomplished. On December 21, 1782, Maxfield was suddenly seized by a paralytic stroke. Wesley says, "I visited Mr. Maxfield, struck with a violent stroke of palsy. He was senseless, and seemed near death; but we besought God for him and his spirit revived, I cannot but think in answer to prayer."¹⁴³ He lingered in that state for over a year. During that time many of the Methodists preached in his chapel. On February 2, 1783, Wesley says, "Mr. Maxfield continuing ill, I preached this afternoon at his chapel. Prejudice seems now dying away: God grant it may never revive!"¹⁴⁴ Maxfield died on March 18, 1784. He was a man of great talents and a warm heart, but he, like many before and after him, was overcome by a sense of his own importance and by an overpowering ambition. There is little doubt, however, that in his later life time healed the bitterness in his heart, and he was the means of saving many souls and of doing great good.

The question of who was the first Methodist lay preacher has caused a great deal of controversy. Lecky wrote:

¹⁴³ John Wesley, Journal, VI, p. 383.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 389-390.

The great difficulty was the small number of teachers and the general hostility of the clergy, but this was remedied in the beginning of 1741 by the institution of lay preachers. Nelson and Maxfield were the two earliest.¹⁴⁵

John Hampson,¹⁴⁶ Dr. Whitehead,¹⁴⁷ William Myles,¹⁴⁸ and several of the lesser known early biographers of Wesley record Thomas Maxfield at the Foundery early in 1740 as the first Methodist lay preacher. Coke and Moore,¹⁴⁹ Southey,¹⁵⁰ Tyerman,¹⁵¹ Green,¹⁵² and numerous others maintain that John Cennick in 1739 at Bristol was really the first Methodist lay preacher. Simon in his incomparable work calls attention to the fact that Joseph Humphreys and Charles Delamotte assisted Wesley long before Cennick.¹⁵³ This confusion has largely grown out of a failure to distinguish between two questions. First, who was the first Methodist lay preacher? Second, who was the first lay preacher who assisted Wesley? The first question really presupposes another question which must be answered before either of the other two can be; namely, when

¹⁴⁵ W. E. H. Lecky, op. cit., vol. III, pp. 70-71.

¹⁴⁶ John Hampson, Memoirs Of The Late Rev. John Wesley, vol. I, p. 174.

¹⁴⁷ John Whitehead, The Life Of The Rev. John Wesley, vol. II, p. 139ff.

¹⁴⁸ William Myles, op. cit., p. 15.

¹⁴⁹ Thomas Coke and Henry Moore, op. cit., p. 219.

¹⁵⁰ Robert Southey, The Life Of Wesley And Rise And Progress Of Methodism, vol. I, pp. 376 and 402.

¹⁵¹ Luke Tyerman, op. cit., vol. I, p. 274.

¹⁵² Richard Green, op. cit., p. 292.

¹⁵³ John Simon, The Religious Societies, pp. 308-310.

did Methodism begin? or more specifically, when did the Methodist Societies begin as distinct from the Church of England Religious Societies? As it was shown earlier, John Wesley puts the first beginning of Methodism as the "Holy Club" in 1729 at Oxford. If this were the case, certainly, Charles Delamotte in Georgia would really be the first Methodist lay preacher. If the true beginning of Methodism is set at Wesley's conversion on May 24, 1738, then John Cennick would become the first Methodist lay preacher. But if, as it was maintained in Part I of this chapter, the real beginning of the Methodist Societies as clearly distinct from the Religious Societies was with the formation of the Foundery Society in London during November, 1739, then yet another order is necessary.¹⁵⁴ Using November 1739 as a starting

¹⁵⁴ Some will say that the societies meeting in the New Room in Bristol were first truly Methodist. But following the lead of both Curnock and Simon, it must be maintained that these societies were still primarily Religious Societies within the Establishment. When, however, in the history of the Bristol societies they ceased to be Religious Societies and became Methodist (as they assuredly did) is almost impossible to ascertain with absolute assurance. In June of 1739 they were not considered Methodist because John Cennick in his "Account. . . of the awakenings at Bristol. . ." (WHS Proceedings, VI, pp. 101ff) on June 12th says, "That evening we visited a society in Baldwin Street of religious young Churchmen who, in a little time afterwards, wholly mingled with the Methodists." (p. 106) It can be said dogmatically that by 1743 when Wesley drew up the rules for the United Societies and they were adopted by the Bristol societies then in fellowship with him, they were definitely Methodist. But, certainly, in name and spirit they were Methodist long before that--probably soon after the formation of the Foundery Society. There might be real justification in saying that the early Kingswood Religious Society was a new departure since there was no Religious Society there before; but because of the Calvinistic turn it soon took, it is evident that somewhat like the Fetter Lane Society, it did not follow through as truly Methodist until a later crisis caused a split in the group.

point and answering the first two questions, some of the confusion can certainly be dispelled. The first Methodist lay preacher was Thomas Maxfield.¹⁵⁵ The first layman who assisted Wesley as a full-time helper was Charles Delamotte in Georgia, later followed John Cennick, then Joseph Humphreys.

After Wesley's full acceptance of Maxfield as a "son in the gospel," the pattern was set. He was convinced of the "absolute necessity" of lay preaching and proceeded in his characteristic manner to adopt it wholeheartedly. Wesley began to accept other lay helpers under the same arrangement.

The "second" lay preacher, according to Wesley, who "came and desired to help me as a son in the gospel" was Thomas Richards. Not many details about his life are now available. Charles Atmore in his Methodist Memorial does not even give his usual brief sketch. From other sources, however, it is known that Richards had a good education and an exceptional knowledge of the classics and ancient languages. John Nelson related an incident that occurred during a journey he was making in company with Richards in 1741:

When we came to Oxford, we met three young gentlemen in their gowns in the street; but I think I never heard a soldier or sailor swear worse than they did. Mr. Richards, being first, and a collegian himself, said, "Gentlemen, I

¹⁵⁵ Charles Atmore, Methodist Memorial, xxxv and p. 266, says that Thomas Maxfield was the first regular lay preacher, Curnock in notes to the Journal, II, p. 352, says that Maxfield was the first of the Methodist Society that acted as a lay preacher.

am ashamed to hear you: it is a sad thing that you should come here to learn to be guides to others in the way to heaven and continue to go in the way to destruction yourselves! One of them said, with a curse, "What, are you a Presbyterian?" When I spoke, another of them said, "These chaps belong to poor Wesley:" so they went away.¹⁵⁶

The college-bred Richards was not plagued with any sense of superiority to his less educated associates in the service of Methodism. But in the early years he was evidently highly valued by Wesley since he was included as one of the four lay members of the first Conference in 1744 and also as a member of the second Conference in 1745. Thereafter, his name is listed in the appointments, but, for one reason or another, he was not invited by Wesley to attend any of the next three Conferences for which there are minutes.

In Wesley's short account of the case of Kingswood School, he says, "The School began on Midsummer Day, 1748."¹⁵⁷ At Conference that year the question was asked, "Q. What masters do you propose to have? (for Kingswood) A. For the languages,--John Jones, T. Richards. . . ."¹⁵⁸ Though Kingswood began that year with six masters and twenty-eight students, Wesley's dreams about his school did not materialize. Things did not go at all well. Within two years the school

¹⁵⁶ John Nelson, Journal, Lives Of The Early Methodist Preachers, editor, Thomas Jackson, I, pp. 72-73, (hereafter referred to as "Lives.)

¹⁵⁷ John Wesley, Journal, III, p. 530.

¹⁵⁸ John Bennet, Minutes Of Conference, WMS Publications, No. I, p. 56.

began to disintegrate. Among the many things that went wrong were some of the Masters, "Thomas) Richards) was so rough and disobliging that the children profited little by him."¹⁵⁹ He and Mary Davey, the widow housekeeper, became enamoured with each other and were eventually married.¹⁶⁰ They left the school together in 1750. However, too much condemnation cannot be heaped upon Richards for his failure at Kingswood.¹⁶¹ Under Wesley's severe monastic plan, the school was almost destined to fail.

Thomas Richards was a most useful assistant, and before this unfortunate experience at Kingswood played a significant role in the early development of Methodism. He was a trustee of both the New Room in Bristol and of the Orphan House at Newcastle and holds a unique place in the history of the movement as being the first to "license" one of the Methodist preaching houses under the 1689 Act of Toleration. In the year 1748, Thomas Richards appeared before the Bristol Court of Quarter Sessions, certified that the New Room was a place for religious worship, and was granted a certificate of record signed by the Clerk of the Peace.¹⁶² This was a step of

¹⁵⁹ John Wesley, Journal, III, p. 530.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 530n.

¹⁶¹ Loc. cit.

¹⁶² John Simon, The Advance Of Methodism, pp. 56-59.

tremendous significance in light of Wesley's constant claims that the Methodist Societies were within the Church of England.

Thomas Richards continued to serve with credit under Wesley's direction until 1759. He became a great friend of Lady Huntingdon, and through her influence he was episcopally ordained and took work in the Church of England. About his later life nothing is known.

The "third" lay preacher, according to Wesley, who came and desired to help him as a son in the gospel, was Thomas Westell.¹⁶³ In the Minutes Of Conference for 1794, the question is asked:

Who have died this year? 1. Thomas Westall, one of the first Methodist Preachers. He preached the gospel faithfully for about forty years. He was a pattern of Christian simplicity and humble love. After suffering much, his triumphant spirit returned to God in the 75th year of his age.¹⁶⁴

Thomas Westell was born in Bristol about 1719. He was a carpenter by trade, but very little of a definite nature is known concerning his life and work. Atmore in his brief "memorial" of Westell says:

He laboured as long as he was able; and then retired from the itinerant life, and settled at Bristol, where he resided for many years; preaching occasionally as his

¹⁶³ John Wesley spelled it Westell. In Myles, Atmore, and Minutes Of Conference it is Westall. Charles Wesley spelled it Westal. John Wesley's spelling is used here.

¹⁶⁴ Minutes Of Conference, vol. I, p. 283.

strength would bear. But for some time before his death his strength was gone, and his mental powers were considerably impaired.¹⁶⁵

Mr. Foster in the W. H. S. Proceedings tells about discovering a family by the name of "Westell" in Bristol's eighteenth century Poll Books which seems to have risen from comparatively humble circumstances into prosperity. He suggests that Thomas Westell probably belonged to the same family and that this accounts for his retirement to Bristol for the last fourteen or fifteen years of his life.¹⁶⁶ Mr. Foster is surely right. Thomas Westell, lived in Bristol probably as a youth and certainly as a retired Methodist preacher after having served about forty years in the itinerancy. Would that there were more information about those forty years of labor in the ranks.

Of the first five Conferences Thomas Westell seems to have been invited to attend ^{only} the third in 1746 which met in the New Room at Bristol. He was evidently not a man of great learning, but certainly one of great courage. Atmore speaks of his ". . . suffering much with great patience and resignation to the Divine Will. . ." at the hands of numerous enraged mobs.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Charles Atmore, op. cit., p. 486.

¹⁶⁶ WHS Proceedings, IV, p. 97.

¹⁶⁷ Charles Atmore, op. cit., p. 486.

The early years of the Methodist revival were years of persecution and violence against life and property; they were years in which the worst discrimination before the bar of justice was commonplace. Charles Wesley records the following incident which occurred in 1744:

I took John Healey's account of their treatment at Nottingham. The Mayor sent for Thomas Westal. John went with him. Thomas desired time to read the oath, which they offered him; upon which Mr. Mayor threatened to send him to prison. While he was making his mittimus, John Healey asked, "Does not the law allow a man three hours to consider of it?" This checked their haste; and they permitted him to hear first what he should swear to. He said, it was all very good, and what he had often heard Mr. Wesley say, that King George was our rightful King, and no other; and he would take this oath with all his heart. . . . They treated them like Faithful and Christian at Vanity-fair, only they did not burn them yet; or even put them in the cage. They demanded their horses for the King's service, and would not believe them that they had none, till they sent and searched.

Not finding any cause to punish, they were forced to dismiss them; but soon after the Mayor sent for Thomas Westal, and commanded him to depart the town. He answered, he should obey his orders, and accordingly came to Epworth.¹⁶⁸

"For what, pray," asked John Wesley, justly proud of his preachers, "could we procure men to do this service?--to be always ready to go to prison or to death?"¹⁶⁹

According to Myles' list of the "First Race Of Methodist Preachers," one other layman, David Taylor, became an assistant of Wesley's sometime during the year 1740. Taylor

¹⁶⁸ Charles Wesley, Journal, I, pp. 355-356.

¹⁶⁹ John Wesley, Journal, III, p. 151.

was an upper servant of the Earl of Huntingdon at their estate, Donnington Park, near Castle Donnington in Leicestershire. He was converted under the preaching of ^{one of} the early Methodists, probably Benjamin Ingham,¹⁷⁰ sometime in 1739 or early 1740 and immediately began to exhort his fellow servants and neighbors "to flee from the wrath to come."

David has been described "as a man of ability, knowledge, and wisdom, who had received a tolerable education."¹⁷¹ Lady Huntingdon, always ready to help and encourage "experimental religion," gave her blessing to his activities and sent him into the villages and hamlets near Donnington Park where he preached with great success. He became a close friend of Ingham and began to preach in his societies. There is no doubt that David Taylor in the early days of his preaching worked under the direction and supervision of Lady Huntingdon and Benjamin Ingham. David preached frequently in the latter's society in Birstal and raised a great spirit of inquiry prior to the return of John Nelson to his native town sometime the last of December, 1740. Nelson records the following in his Journal:

A few days after I had got home, David Taylor came to preach in our town, in Mr. Ingham's Society, when I went to hear him: and a dry morsel his sermon was. Several that were acquainted with him followed me, and wanted to

¹⁷⁰ John Wesley, Journal, III, p. 112n.

¹⁷¹ Life And Times of Selina Countess Of Huntingdon, vol. I, p. 43.

know how I liked the discourse, I was backward to tell them; but they pressed hard on me, and said, "Do you not think he is as good a preacher as Mr. Wesley?" I said, "There is no comparison between his preaching and Mr. Wesley's: he has not stayed long enough in the large room at Jerusalem." After they had been gone sometime, they came again to ask what I meant. I said, "He is not endued with power from on high." They went and related to him what I said; and he told me since, that, if I had been present, he could have stabbed me; yet he could not rest till he went to hear Mr. Wesley in London. Then he found what was said was true; and he came down to Sheffield and into Derbyshire, preaching what he called Wesley's doctrine, and awakened and converted many scores of people, till the Germans got to him, and made him deny the law of God: then he became as salt without savour.¹⁷²

During that trip to London, Taylor heard Wesley for the first time. The very earliest then that Taylor could be considered a preacher of Wesley's would have been after his return from London which could not have been before the opening months of 1741. Therefore, Myles is wrong in giving 1740 as the date Taylor commenced to assist Wesley. When Taylor returned from his trip to London, as Nelson said, he came ". . . preaching what he called Wesley's doctrine. . . ." Even then he was probably only a "self-styled" assistant and not appointed by Wesley for at that time Wesley had no societies in the Midlands. His work was not yet established there.

Wesley's first visit to the Midlands after his conversion began on June 9, 1741, and was probably at the request of Lady Huntingdon.¹⁷³ In his Diary for June 10th, he says,

¹⁷² John Nelson, op. cit., pp. 38, 39.

¹⁷³ John Wesley, Journal, II, pp. 462 ff.

"set out with David Taylor (Lady Huntingdon's evangelist coachman)."¹⁷⁴ The Countess had arranged for David Taylor to act as Wesley's guide and travelling companion on his first evangelistic tour through the Midlands. It was during these days that Wesley really became acquainted with Taylor and his work. Probably, it was then he first accepted him as a full "son in the gospel."

In 1742 Wesley says, "Having a great mind to see David Taylor, whom God had made an instrument of good to many souls, I rode to Sheffield. . . ."¹⁷⁵ There is no doubt that at this time he was a most effective assistant, and Wesley greatly valued his services. It was under Taylor's preaching that John Bennet was converted. Bennet was visiting Sheffield to enter a horse in the races, when a friend persuaded him to go to hear Taylor preach. He went to laugh, but was so impressed by what he heard that he invited Taylor to his home. There, converted under Taylor's guidance, he began to preach and became one of the most successful of Wesley's evangelists.

But David Taylor had some inherent weaknesses that soon began to reveal themselves. Wesley observed them very early and was able to profit by his helper's mistakes. He remarked: "I found he (Taylor) had occasionally exhorted multitudes of people in various parts; but after that he had taken no thought

¹⁷⁴ John Wesley, Journal, II, p. 462.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., III, p. 24, June 24, 1742.

about them; so that the greater part were fallen asleep again."¹⁷⁶ Wesley was convinced that mere preaching was not enough. It left little of permanent value with those who only listened. After this experience he was strengthened in his resolve to form societies wherever he preached that the results might be preserved and extended.¹⁷⁷

About that time Taylor invoked the displeasure of the Countess and of Wesley by contracting an ill-judged marriage,¹⁷⁸ and because he had fallen under the paralyzing spell of the "still" brethren. In a letter dated January 9, 1742, addressed to John Wesley, Lady Huntingdon says:

Your opinion of David will, I fear, be found true. I think it will be best to take no notice till I find a way to do it effectually. When we lose our plainness, there ends the Christian. A double-minded man who can hear?¹⁷⁹

David began to display schismatic tendencies; and Lady Huntingdon wrote to Wesley again on March 25, 1742:

I had yours today. John Taylor¹⁸⁰ will be with you by the time this is: do with him what you will. I bid him tell you from me, that unless David Taylor would commit his flock into your and your brother's hands, I dare not support or countenance him.

I ask myself, "Would you trust David with the guidance of your soul?" I say, No, not for worlds. Then am I not much unlike a Christian neighbour to approve it in others? But I find he is going to build himself a room, and to

¹⁷⁶ John Wesley, Journal, III, p. 25.

¹⁷⁷ John Simon, The Methodist Societies, p. 78.

¹⁷⁸ The details of this marriage are neither clear nor dependable. Atmore says that he was not married according "to the mode prescribed by law." (p. 412) Others say that it was just an "ill-judged" or "ill-considered" marriage. (Life Of Selina Countess Of Huntingdon, p. 43)

¹⁷⁹ Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, 1845, p. 1072.

¹⁸⁰ David Taylor's brother.

break (I doubt) with the Ministers, and become a lay teacher. He has more pride than ever I saw in man. If he will commit his poor sheep into your hands, and will say, "How far shall I go?" and then go no further, I will assist in the room, school, etc.; but else will I do nothing.¹⁸¹

The influence of Lady Huntingdon prevailed. Taylor returned into full fellowship with the Wesleys and rendered noble service for awhile. He will always be remembered in the annals of early Methodism because of his courage. He was the brave companion of Charles Wesley in his memorable stand in Sheffield on May 25, 1743:

In the afternoon I came to the flock in Sheffield, who are as sheep in the midst of wolves; the Ministers having so stirred up the people, that they are ready to tear them in pieces. Most of them have passed through the fire of stillness, which came to try them, as soon as they tasted the grace of the Lord.

At six I went to the Society-house, next door to our brother Bennet's. Hell from beneath was moved to oppose us. As soon as I was in the desk with David Taylor, the floods began to lift up their voice. An officer (Ensign Garden) contradicted and blasphemed. I took no notice of him, and sung on. The stones flew thick, hitting the desk and people. To save them and the house, I gave notice I should preach out, and look the enemy in the face.

The whole army of the aliens followed me. The Captain laid hold on me, and began reviling. I gave him for answer, "A Word In Season; or, Advice to a Soldier;" then prayed, particularly for His Majesty King George, and preached the Gospel with much contention. The stones often struck me in the face. After sermon I prayed for sinners, as servants of their master, the devil; upon which the Captain ran at me with great fury, threatening revenge for my abusing, as he called it, "the King his master." He forced his way through the brethren, drew his sword, and presented it to my breast. My breast was immediately steeled. I threw it open, and, fixing mine

¹⁸¹ Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, 1845, pp. 1072-1073.

eye on his, smiled in his face, and calmly said, "I fear God, and honour the King." His countenance fell in a moment, he fetched a deep sigh, put up his sword, and quietly left the place.¹⁸²

Two days later in Thorpe David Taylor stood by Wesley again unflinching before the eggs, the stones, and dirt with which they were scourged. Charles says, "David Taylor they wounded in his forehead, which bled much. . . . Blessed be God, I got no hurt, but only the eggs and dirt. My clothes indeed abhorred me, and my arm pained me a little by a blow I received at Sheffield."¹⁸³ Certainly, the bravery of these two intrepid soldiers of Christ will never be questioned.

But David seems to have been a very unstable personality. Soon the "still" brethren prevailed with him again.

Writing in November, 1743, John Wesley says:

. . . I received a full account of poor David Taylor, once a workman that needed not to be ashamed. Three years since he knew all we preached to be true. Then Mr. Ingham brought him over to German Stillness. When I talked with him at Sheffield he was thoroughly sensible to his mistake but Mr. Simpson soon drew him into it again. A third time he was deeply convinced by my brother; and unconvinced shortly after. He was once more brought into the Scripture way by Mr. Graves, and seemed to be established therein; but in a few months he veered about to the old point, and has been "a poor sinner" indeed ever since.¹⁸⁴

David's usefulness was greatly impaired by his instability.

In 1746 he left the Methodists again and united with the

¹⁸² Charles Wesley, Journal, I, p. 309.

¹⁸³ Ibid., pp. 311-312.

¹⁸⁴ John Wesley, Journal, III, p. 112.

Moravians. Still not finding himself comfortable, he soon left them, and then joined, or at least attended the meetings of, the Quakers, but there also he found no rest. Finally, he returned again to the Methodists and attempted to preach once more; but, alas! his gifts were gone!¹⁸⁵ The balance of his life was lived in obscurity. He died about 1780.

During 1741, besides David Taylor, five more young laymen began to assist John Wesley as sons in the gospel. These were Alexander Coates, John Haughton, John Nelson, Robert Swindels, and Thomas Williams. The outstanding figure of this group was, of course, John Nelson, the Yorkshire stonemason whose life and work will be given in some detail in the next chapter.

Alexander Coates was a man of exceptional ability and knowledge. He was widely known as a "popular and Scriptural" preacher and served with distinction until his death in 1765.¹⁸⁶ Thomas Williams was a well educated man with a university degree. He possessed an attractive personality, pleasing manners, and made a splendid appearance. He holds the distinction of being the first of Wesley's assistants to preach in Ireland in the year 1747.¹⁸⁷ Though he served faithfully and

¹⁸⁵ Charles Atmore, op. cit., pp. 412-413.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 75 ff.

¹⁸⁷ Luke Tyerman, op. cit., vol. I, p. 557.

well for a number of years, he became a great source of trial to Wesley and was eventually expelled from the fellowship.¹⁸⁸ Later he received episcopal ordination and served in the Establishment the balance of his days. John Haughton was also episcopally ordained and left the service of Wesley in 1760. Robert Swindels, says Atmore:

. . . was a man of deep piety, great zeal, and universal benevolence. His charity to the poor and the destitute was so great, that he not only gave them all the money he could spare himself, but sometimes gave them part of his own raiment, which he at times could ill spare. . . one who knew him well says, "I never knew him to speak a word that he did not mean; and he always spoke the truth in love." He was never heard to say an unkind word of any one. The law of kindness was in his heart.¹⁸⁹

Robert Swindels was severely afflicted and endured great pain for many years before his death in 1783.

In the year 1742 eleven new men joined the ranks of the itinerancy. 1743 saw the addition of ten more travelling assistants. At the time of the first Conference in June of 1744, Myles' list shows that there were thirty-five laymen who were itinerant preachers and three who were local preachers.¹⁹⁰

One of the important considerations at that first Conference arose on the fifth day. The question was asked, "Are Lay Assistants allowable?"¹⁹¹ Though the turn of the discussion

¹⁸⁸ See Chapter III, "Unworthy Assistants" where Williams is treated in more detail.

¹⁸⁹ Charles Atmore, op. cit., p. 409.

¹⁹⁰ William Myles, op. cit., pp. 446-449.

¹⁹¹ John Bennet, op. cit., p. 14.

is unknown, the decision was, "only in cases of necessity."¹⁹² But the present was understood to be one of those "cases of necessity." It is clear that Wesley's experience during the four years immediately preceeding had confirmed him in his decision to accept the help of lay preachers when circumstances made it necessary. Therefore, if they were "allowable" in such cases, the Conference was of the opinion that their office should be defined, and that rules should be drawn up for their guidance and control.¹⁹³ The first form of what soon became known as the "Twelve Rules of a Helper" were discussed and adopted.¹⁹⁴ Their office was defined and limited. From that point lay preaching became an institution in the Methodist Societies.

But the decision was not quickly or easily accepted by the world outside. As Wesley began to train and mobilize these laymen into a compact well-organized machine for the spread of "Scriptural Christianity" throughout the land, criticism of such gross irregularities grew violent. As Vulliamy has pointed out the only valid charge in all this avalanche of effervescent opposition hurled against them was that of "irregularity." Speaking of the Methodists in "a dull

¹⁹² John Bennet, op. cit., p. 14.

¹⁹³ John Simon, The Methodist Societies, p. 216.

¹⁹⁴ See Chapter IV for a detailed account of the first Conferences and their considerations of lay preaching.

nonsensical romance" called The Spiritual Quixote, Richard Graves said; "I know of no new opinions which they maintain, except that of the lawfulness of preaching without a call; and of assembling in conventicles or in the open fields in direct opposition to the laws of the land."¹⁹⁵ Vigorously attacked at these his weakest points, Wesley was forced to come to the defence of his lay preachers which he readily did with zeal and with power. Wesley was commissioned by the first Conference to write A Farther Appeal To Men of Reason and Religion which was completed in 1745. In the third section appeared his classic defence of the institution of lay preaching. A part of this has already been quoted on pages 74-75, but here a bit more must be set forth:

And I am bold to affirm, (says Wesley) that these unlettered men have help from God for that great work,--the saving souls from death; seeing he hath enabled, and doth enable them still, to "turn many to righteousness." Thus hath he "destroyed the wisdom of the wise, and brought to nought the understanding of the prudent. . . . Nay, we had the deepest prejudices against it; until we could not but own that God gave "wisdom from above" to these unlearned and ignorant men, so that the work of the Lord prospered in their hand, and sinners were daily converted to God.

Indeed, in the one thing which they profess to know, they are not ignorant men. I trust there is not one of them who is not able to go through such an examination, in substantial, practical, experimental Divinity, as few of our candidates for holy orders, even in the University, (I speak it with sorrow and shame, and in tender love,) are able to do. But, O! what manner of examination do most of these candidates go through! and what proof are

¹⁹⁵ C. E. Vulliamy, John Wesley, p. 105

the testimonials commonly brought, (as solemn as the form is wherein they run,) either of their piety or knowledge to whom are entrusted those sheep which God hath purchased with his own blood!¹⁹⁶

On May 4, 1748, Wesley published "A Letter To A Clergyman" which was the result of a conversation he had with an unidentified Anglican Divine who had objected to persons being allowed to preach who had not received a university education and permission from a "properly" constituted authority. This defence deserves to be quoted in its entirety in a study of this nature:

Reverend Sir,--I have at present neither leisure nor inclination to enter into a formal controversy; but you will give me leave just to offer a few loose hints relating to the subject of last night's conversation.

1. Seeing life and health are things of so great importance, it is without question highly expedient that physicians should have all possible advantages of learning and education.

2. That trial should be made of them by competent judges before they practise publicly.

3. That after such trial they be authorized to practise by those who are empowered to convey that authority.

4. And that, while they are preserving the lives of others, they should have what is sufficient to sustain their own.

5. But, supposing a gentleman bred at the University in Dublin, with all the advantages of education, after he has undergone all the usual trials, and then been regularly authorized to practise,--

6. Suppose, I say, this physician settles at----for some years, and yet makes no cures at all; but, after trying his skill on five hundred persons, cannot show that he has healed one, many of his patients dying under his hands, and the rest remaining just as they were before he came,--

¹⁹⁶ John Wesley, Works, VIII, pp. 220-221.

7. Will you condemn a man who, having some little skill in physic and a tender compassion for those who are sick or dying all around him, cures many of those without fee or reward whom the doctor could not cure?--

8. At least, did not; which is the same thing as to the case in hand, were it only for this reason--because he did not go to them, and they would not come to him.

9. Will you condemn him, because he has not learning? or has not had an university education? What then? He cures those whom the man of learning and education cannot cure.

10. Will you object, that he is no physician nor has any authority to practise? I cannot come into your opinion. I think medicus est qui medetur, 'he is a physician who heals,' and that every man has authority to save the life of a dying man. But, if you only mean he has no authority to take fees, I contend not; for he takes none at all.

11. Nay, and I am afraid it will hold, on the other hand, medicus non est qui non medetur;--I am afraid, if we use propriety of speech, 'he is no physician who works no cure.'

12. 'Oh, but he has taken his degree of Doctor of Physic, and therefore has authority.' Authority to do what? 'Why, to heal all the sick that will employ him.' But (to waive the case of those who will not employ him; and would you have even their lives thrown away?) he does not heal those that do employ him. He that was sick before is sick still; or else he is gone hence, and is no more seen. Therefore his authority is not worth a rush; for it serves not the end for which it was given.

13. And surely he has not authority to kill them by hindering another from saving their lives!

14. If he either attempts or desires to hinder him, if he condemns or dislikes him for it, it is plain to all thinking men he regards his own fees more than the lives of his patients.

II. Now to apply. 1. Seeing life everlasting and holiness, or health of soul, are things of so great importance, it was highly expedient that ministers, being physicians of the soul, should have all advantages of education and learning.

2. That full trial should be made of them in all respects, and that by the most competent judges, before they enter on the public exercise of their office, the saving souls from death.

3. That after such trial they be authorized to exercise that office by those who are empowered to convey that authority. (I believe bishops are empowered to do this, and have been so from the apostolic age.)

4. And that those whose souls they save ought in the meantime to provide them what is needful for the body.

5. But, suppose a gentleman bred at the University of Dublin, with all the advantages of education, after he has undergone the usual trials, and been regularly authorized to save souls from death,--

6. Suppose, I say, this minister settles at ---- for some years, and yet saves no soul at all, saves no sinners from their sins; but, after he has preached all this time to five or six hundred persons, cannot show that he has converted one from the error of his ways, many of his parishioners dying as they lived, and the rest remaining just as they were before he came,--

7. Will you condemn a man who, having compassion on dying souls and some knowledge of the gospel of Christ, without any temporal reward, saves many from their sins whom the minister could not save?--

8. At least, did not: nor ever was likely to do it; for he did not go to them, and they would not come to him.

9. Will you condemn such a preacher, because he has not learning? or has not had an university education? What then? He saves those sinners from their sins whom the man of learning and education cannot save. A peasant being brought before the College of Physicians in Paris, a learned doctor accosted him, 'What, friend, do you pretend to prescribe to people that have agues? Dost thou know what an ague is?' He replied, 'Yes, sir. An ague is what I can cure and you cannot.'

10. Will you object, 'But he is no minister, nor has any authority to save souls'? I must beg leave to dissent from you in this. I think he is a true, evangelical minister, *διάκονος*, servant of Christ and His Church, who *οὕτω διάκονος*, so ministers, as to save souls from death, to reclaim sinners from their sins; and that every Christian, if he be able to do it, has authority to save a dying soul. But, if you only mean he has no authority to take tithes, I grant it. He takes none; as he has freely received, so he freely gives.

11. But to carry the matter a little farther. I am afraid it will hold, on the other hand, with regard to the soul as well as the body, medicus non est qui non medetur;--I am afraid reasonable men will be much inclined to think he that saves no souls is no minister of Christ.

12. 'Oh, but he is ordained, and therefore has authority.' Authority to do what? 'To save all the souls that will put themselves under his care.' True; but (to waive the case of them that will not; and would you desire that even those should perish?) he does not, in fact, save them that are under his care. Therefore what end does his authority serve? He was a drunkard is a drunkard still. The same is true of the Sabbath-breaker, the thief, the

common swearer. This is the best of the case; for many have died in their iniquity, and their blood will God require at the watchman's hand.

13. For surely he has no authority to murder souls, either by his neglect, by his smooth if not false doctrine, or by hindering another from plucking them out of the fire and bringing them to life everlasting!

14. If he either attempts or desires to hinder him, if he condemns or is displeased with him for it, how great reason is there to fear that he regards his own profit more than the salvation of souls.--I am, reverend sir,
Your affectionate brother.¹⁹⁷

From this position Wesley never retreated. But, as year piled upon year, as his experience increased, he became more and more convinced of the lawfulness and value of lay preaching. After sixteen years of experience he wrote, "So great a blessing has from the beginning attended the labours of these itinerants that we have been more and more convinced every year of the more than lawfulness of this proceeding."¹⁹⁸

This brings to a close the history of the rise of lay preaching in early Methodism which has been given along with John Wesley's developing ideas on lay preaching because the two themes are inseparable. It remains now to look briefly at the views of two other early Methodists, Charles Wesley and George Whitefield.

¹⁹⁷ John Wesley, Letters, II, pp. 146-149.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., III, p. 192, To Samuel Walker, from Kingswood, September 3, 1756.

IV CHARLES WESLEY AND GEORGE WHITEFIELD ON LAY PREACHING

In Bristol in 1739 when John Wesley first condoned and encouraged John Cennick in his preaching to the colliers of Kingswood, he incurred the sincere opposition of both Charles Wesley and George Whitefield. Charles Wesley in his Journal for May 16, 1739, says, "At Fetter-Lane a dispute arose about lay-preaching. Many, particularly Bray and Fish, were very zealous for it. Mr. Whitefield and I declared against it."¹⁹⁹ There is no doubt that much of their opposition at that time was caused by a party within the Fetter Lane Society that was opposed to the society's connection with the Church of England and that maintained the right of the laity to baptize, to administer the Lord's Supper, and to preach. The most outspoken of the party were Shaw, Bray, and Bowers who also went beyond these claims and maintained the fact of special inspiration and insisted on the right and duty of persons so inspired to speak out the messages they received regardless of the time or place. Needless, to say, such a doctrine led to great abuse. It seems that Bowers was the most "inspired" of all and usually chose the most inappropriate times and places to receive his inspirations. Charles Wesley records several of these incidents. One was in the Islington Church yard on April 28, 1739. After

¹⁹⁹ Charles Wesley, Journal, I, p. 149.

Whitefield had preached, ". . . Bowers got up to speak: I conjured him not; but he beat me down, and followed his impulse."²⁰⁰ Charles then took as many as would accompany him and left Bowers to his "impulses." But the public did not distinguish between Bowers on the one hand and the Wesleys and Whitefield on the other. Such irresponsible behavior reflected upon them all. It, doubtless, confirmed the Islington Church Wardens in their opposition to the whole group because the following day Charles Wesley was forbidden to preach in the church again. Another incident occurred on July 3rd of the same year. "Poor wild Bowers," says Wesley, "had been laid hold on for preaching in Oxford. Today the Beadle brought him to me. I spoke to him very home(ly). He had nothing to reply; but promised to do so no more; and thereby obtained his liberty."²⁰¹

Charles Wesley was also opposed to lay preaching on ~~other~~ grounds. John Wesley had been a high churchman in his early days, but time and experience altered his opinions. Charles Wesley, though he modified his position and accepted temporary arrangements to meet immediate problems, remained a high churchman to the end. The crying needs of the multitude of lost souls everywhere forced his compassionate nature to

²⁰⁰ Charles Wesley, Journal, I, p. 148.

²⁰¹ Ibid., p. 156.

realize that help was essential. Since there was no other supply available, he reluctantly accepted lay preaching as a temporary arrangement. An interesting interview between Charles Wesley and Archbishop Robinson is recorded by Tyerman:

"I knew your brother well," said Robinson, the Archbishop of Armagh, when he met Charles Wesley at the Hotwells, Bristol: "I knew your brother well; I could never credit all I heard respecting him and you; but one thing in your conduct I could never account for, your employing laymen." "My Lord," said Charles, "the fault is yours and your brethren's." "How so?" asked the primate. "Because you hold your peace, and the stones cry out." "But I am told," his grace continued, "that they are unlearned men." "Some are," said the sprightly poet, "and so the dumb ass rebukes the prophet." His lordship said no more.²⁰²

Charles Wesley had a strong feeling of friendship and respect for many of the lay helpers of Methodism. On July 9, 1739, he says, "I corrected Mr. Cennick's hymns for the press."²⁰³ Many were his trips to Wales where he labored shoulder to shoulder with his old friend, Howell Harris, whom he called, "a man after my own heart."²⁰⁴ His sincere respect and warm regard for Harris is well known. In fact, there were times when it seemed that Charles had been completely won over to the cause of lay preaching. In 1746 he visited the society at Road and remarked:

I conferred with several who have tasted the love of Christ, mostly under the preaching or prayers of our lay-helpers. How can anyone dare deny that they are

²⁰² Luke Tyerman, op. cit., vol. I, p. 277.

²⁰³ Charles Wesley, Journal, I, p. 157.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 148, April 25, 1739.

sent of God? O that all who have the outward call were as inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to preach! O that they would make full proof of their ministry, and take the cause out of our weak hands!²⁰⁵

But Charles' hesitancy is soon evidenced again. There is no doubt that he recognized the value of the lay preachers and appreciated the work they were doing; yet, he always maintained that it was only a limited and temporary service for which they were authorized. This is clearly revealed in an account of his visit to Gwennap in June of 1746:

Both sheep and shepherds had been scattered in the late cloudy day of persecution, but the Lord gathered them again, and kept them together by their own brethren; who began to exhort their companions, one or more in every Society. No less than four have sprung up in Gwennap. I talked closely with each, and find no reason to doubt their having been used by God thus far. I advised and charged them not to stretch themselves beyond their line, by speaking out of the Society, or fancying themselves public teachers. If they keep within their bounds as they promise, they may be useful in the church: and I would to God that all the Lord's people were Prophets, like these!²⁰⁶

Their only authorized sphere for preaching, according to Charles, was within the Methodist Societies.

Difficulties over the work and powers of lay preachers increasingly arose between the Wesleys. John favored giving them more responsibility and wider powers. Charles saw the fact of separation looming up ahead if the lay preachers were

²⁰⁵ Charles Wesley, Journal, I, p. 413, April 30, 1746.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 419.

too firmly established; therefore, as the years went by he tended to become more conservative in his attitude toward the assistants. In 1751 a formal agreement was arrived at between John and Charles Wesley concerning the administration and control of the lay preachers. A document entitled, "Articles of Agreement," was composed and signed by the two brothers in the presence of Vincent Perronet. By 1756, however, Charles' worst fears were aroused. The Methodist Societies were growing so rapidly and the institution of lay preaching was becoming so well established that it no longer appeared to be--it no longer was--a temporary arrangement. The order of Methodist preachers was established. His fears are expressed in an important letter to the Rev. Samuel Walker of Truro, to whom he writes:

Lay-preaching it must be allowed is a Partial separation; & may, but need not, end in a Total one. The Probability of it, has made me tremble for years past; & kept me from leaving the Methodists. I stay not so much to do good, as to prevent evil. I stand in the way of my Brother's violent Counsellors, the object both of their Fear & Hate.

The Regulations you propose are the same in substance which I have been long contending for in vain. GOD incline my Brother's Heart to admit of them! I know he will not hear laying aside his Lay-preachers in so many words. All I can desire of him, to begin, is

1. To cut off all their Hopes of his ever leaving the Church of England.
2. To put a stop to any more new Preachers, till he has entirely regulated, disciplined & secured the old ones.

If he wavers still & trims betwⁿ y^e Church & Them, I know not what to do. As yet it is in his Power, if he exert himself to stop the evil. But I fear he will never have another opportunity. The Tide will be too strong for him & bear him away into the Gulph of separation.

Must I not therefore enter my Protest & give up the preachers formally to Him? Hoc Ithacus volit: & they impatiently wait for it. The restless Pains of bad men to thrust me out from the Methodists seems a plain argument for my continuing with them. I want light, would have no will of my own, but prove what is that good & perfect Will of GOD. In my next I may have time for a more particular Answer.²⁰⁷

This letter gives the impression that the lay preachers were all plotting to cast Charles Wesley out of the Methodist fold. Nothing could be further from the truth. The preachers naturally sensed his disapproval of their position and never felt as close to him as they did to his brother, John. Nevertheless, he was greatly respected and revered by most of the preachers. Charles is evidently writing in one of his moods of despair at the turn of events, and the strong feelings expressed in this letter were soon mitigated. He always loved the preachers as individuals and honored the work they did, but his love for the Church and his strict adherence to its form made him hesitant and fearful of anything that might tend toward separation. He was wise in realizing that lay preaching made separation almost inevitable, if not a present fact. Though his soul rejoiced to see men saved, his heart was heavy to see them growing away from the Church he so dearly loved. But it will forever stand to his credit that he put the saving of souls above his love of the Church and stood beside his lay brethren as fellow laborers in the fields that were white unto the harvest.

²⁰⁷ WHS Proceedings, XV, p. 71, Bristol, August 21, 1756.

Whitefield was also opposed to lay preaching in the early days of the revival. As soon as news reached him in London about John Cennick's preaching at Kingswood, he immediately wrote to John Wesley:

I suspend my judgment of Brother Watkins' and Cennick's behaviour till I am better acquainted with the circumstances of their proceeding. I think there is a great difference between them and Howel Harris. He has offered himself thrice for holy orders; him therefore and our friends at Cambridge I shall encourage: others I cannot countenance in acting in so public a manner. The consequences of beginning to teach too soon will be exceeding bad--Brother Ingham is of my opinion.²⁰⁸

Nevertheless, his experience with Howell Harris, John Cennick, Joseph Humphreys, and several others soon convinced him completely. Unlike Charles Wesley, once he had accepted the principle of lay preaching, he adopted it whole-heartedly. The exact time of his change of mind is not clear; but very soon after John Wesley's full acceptance of this innovation, Whitefield was working hand in hand with them all. After the unhappy separation in 1741, Whitefield readily accepted the help of Joseph Humphreys, Cennick, and numerous other laymen. From that position he never wavered.

²⁰⁸ Luke Tyerman, op. cit., vol. I, p. 377.

SUMMARY

The rise of lay preaching in early Methodism was a slow and gradual process growing out of the necessities of the work. Some features of its first years suggested that it would prove a mistaken experiment--soon to be discarded. It was very discouraging that all of the first four lay preachers who assisted Wesley sooner or later withdrew from the itinerancy; and, of the first twelve, eight either withdrew or were expelled. It was only natural, however, in those early days when experience was lacking that numerous mistakes were made and many false steps had to be retraced. Lay preaching was accepted only with great hesitancy and much trepidation.

But that which was at first the most questionable sapling grew and blossomed at last into the most productive tree of all. From those shaky beginnings, sprang great towers of strength like John Nelson, Christopher Hopper, Thomas Olivers, John Haime, Thomas Walsh, and many others. The coming chapter will deal with these stalwarts of Christ who became Wesley's invincible companions in the task of bringing "scriptural holiness" to the land. But for now it is sufficient to give thanks that the Wesleys were obedient unto the light that was given unto them and did not close the mouths of Delamotte, Cennick, and Maxfield when they presumed to preach. It was a happy thing for Methodism and for England that they learned well the

lesson that Moses had taught to Joshua so many centuries before.

209 That lesson has been expressed in unforgettable verse

by Charles Wesley:

Moses the minister of God
 Rebukes our partial love,
 Who envy at the gifts bestowed
 On those we disapprove;
 We do not our own spirit know,
 Who wish to see suppressed
 The men that Jesu's spirit show,
 The men whom God hath blessed.

Shall we the Spirit's course restrain,
 Or quench the heavenly fire?
 Let God His messengers ordain,
 And whom He will inspire.
 Blow as He list, the Spirit's choice
 Of instruments we bless;
 We will, if Christ be preached, rejoice
 And wish the word success.²¹⁰

209 Numbers 11:10-30.

210 Charles Wesley, Short Hymns On Select Passages Of
The Holy Scriptures, vol. I, p. 274.

CHAPTER III

THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF THE EARLY METHODIST LAY PREACHERS

Following the careful consideration of the rise and establishment of the institution of lay preaching in early Methodism, it now becomes necessary to consider the life and character of Wesley's first assistants. Because of the large number of lay preachers who helped Wesley during his lifetime (six hundred and fifty-three), it will be possible to give only a few representative lives and then make certain general observations about the group as a whole. It is true that generalizations are always dangerous where exactitude is essential and should be avoided on most occasions. In this case, however, generalizations are not only necessary but desirable. Interest here lies not so much in individual lives as it does in the general characteristics of the total body of preachers. Surprisingly enough, it will be clearly seen as the account progresses that this large number of men had so many things in common that the task is not difficult.

. This chapter, therefore, will attempt to portray as accurately as possible the life and character of the early assistants of John Wesley: I, by presenting some revealing facts and figures about the walks of life from which they came; II, by summarizing the lives of three representative

preachers chosen to reveal the principal types of men and experience that produced a Methodist preacher; III, by portraying some of the general characteristics that were common to them all and illustrating these from their lives; IV, by giving two illustrations of unworthy assistants who were expelled.

I WHENCE THEY CAME

The information in this chapter is largely based upon the sixty-six biographies and autobiographies of the early Methodist preachers that have been preserved.¹ It might be felt, however, that these lives, published at the instigation of Wesley, are not truly representative of the whole body of preachers because he would naturally be prone to choose those who had rendered outstanding service. Certainly, it should be kept in mind that many of the published lives were considered to be of his best and most successful assistants. Nevertheless, in the considerable number of memoirs printed, Wesley was not too discriminating in his selection and being primarily interested in their religious experiences included some who were weak in gifts but strong in faith. Numbered among the sixty-six lives were nine who later departed from the work and two who

¹ Printed first in the Arminian Magazine between 1778 and 1811; see Foreword for a further explanation; see Appendix B for a list of those used here.

were expelled. Therefore, although the facts gleaned from these accounts tend to magnify, they still give a fairly clear picture of the life and character of the average early Methodist preacher. One further thing should be kept in mind. Because these autobiographies were largely written to bear witness to the writers' evangelical conversions, everything else is subservient to that one aim. Consequently, many of the dates and facts so important for a study of this nature are often missing. But the following pages are the result of that considerable body of material that does exist and is available.²

1. Homes of Their Fathers

The homes from which the lay preachers of the first two generations came show a marked similarity in economic and social standing. Of the sixty-six men examined, thirty-three record the exact occupations of their fathers. There were one large and seven small independent farmers, four tradesmen or shopkeepers, three laborers, two contractors, two clothiers, two public house keepers, two gardeners, and one each of the following:

² W. J. Warner in his helpful book on The Wesleyan Movement In The Industrial Revolution, chapter VIII, pp. 248-267, has produced a very interesting study on the social and economic background of sixty-three of Wesley's early helpers. From the standpoint of the present work, however, his detailed findings are valueless because he fails to give the names of the lives examined. But after a corresponding review of the sixty-six lives now under consideration, similar conclusions have been reached.

teacher, woolen manufacturer, tanner, shoemaker, barber, butcher, pilchard fisherman, mason, baker, and carpenter.

It is difficult to classify occupations sharply into working or middle class. There is always that group of skilled ~~led~~ artisans, small tradesmen, and independent farmers ranging between the upper-working and middle classes which falls into a division almost of its own. Some might simply call it the lower-middle class. But by classifying those occupations separately as "artisan," it becomes clear from which group practically all of the early preachers came. The families for which definite information is available fall into the following categories:

Working Class	.	.	.	.	7
Artisan Class	.	.	.	.	24
Middle Class	.	.	.	.	$\frac{2}{33}$

It appears from the lives of the other thirty-three lay preachers who give no specific information on the matter that their families were of approximately the same social and economic status. "Practically all of the regular preachers," W. J. Warner rightly concludes about the period between 1740-1791, "were drawn from a single social stratum, located between 'unskilled labour' and the 'middle class.'"³

³ W. J. Warner, op. cit., p. 250.

2. Previous Occupations

Forty-six of the sixty-six lives indicate the exact occupations in which the writers were engaged before being called into full time itinerant service. Among these forty-six, however, some indicate the fact that they were apprenticed to several trades before finally settling upon one, and it becomes difficult at times to choose their principal occupation. Many others entered the itinerancy so young that they had served only a few years of their apprenticeship and never really became a master of their trade. For present purposes it has been assumed that if an apprentice had not gone into the itinerancy so young he would have become a master in time; for example, an apprenticed stonemason is called a mason and is considered in the artisan class. The preachers before becoming full time assistants were engaged as follows:

Clothiers .	7	Stonemasons .	2	Contractor .	1
Farmers .	5	Printers .	2	Architect .	1
Clerks .	5	Fisherman .	1	Personal Servant .	1
Teachers .	4	Gardener .	1	Manufacturer.	1
Shopkeepers.	3	Mechanic .	1	Blacksmith .	1
Businessmen	2	Stuff-maker .	1	Surgeon .	1
Bakers .	2	Wheel-wright.	1	Total	<u>46</u>
Miners .	2	Carpenter .	1		

These occupations fall into the following categories:

Working Class	.	.	.	8
Artisan Class	.	.	.	24
Middle Class	.	.	.	14
Total				<u>46</u>

The class from which the majority of Wesley's helpers came is clear.

3. Religious Background

The religious backgrounds of the early Methodist preachers evidence a noticeable affinity. The following table shows how they were distributed among the churches:

Anglican	.	.	.	.	29
Methodist	.	.	.	.	4
Church of Scotland			.	.	4
"Dissenters" ⁴	.	.	.	.	3
Roman Catholic	.	.	.	.	3
Quakers	.	.	.	.	2
Anabaptist	.	.	.	.	1
Particular Anabaptist	.	.	.	.	1
Not indicated.	.	.	.	.	<u>19</u>
Total					66

⁴ Indicated only as "Dissenter."

It should be added that those listed as Methodist usually had Anglican ties and that by far the majority of those "not indicated" were probably affiliated in some degree with the Establishment. Therefore, the preponderance of Anglican background becomes even more pronounced.

Another interesting similarity in their early lives, stressed by Warner, is the fact that practically all of them came from homes in which the religious interest was strong. They record their early experiences of profound religious thoughts. Seven of the lives assert that they were brought up "in the fear of God." Fifty-two go further and make some definite references to serious religious considerations in their childhood that were composed mostly of terrifying visions and dreams of hell and brimstone as a judgement upon their youthful vices. The early Methodist preachers, therefore, principally came from homes that had some interest in religion and that were predominantly Church of England.

4. Growing Stability

Of the one hundred and ninety-three assistants listed by Myles in the first generation of Methodist preachers, one hundred and seven departed from the work, seven were expelled,⁵

⁵ Myles gives eight, but Thomas Meyrick (Myles spells it Merrick) departed from the work. No evidence can be found to support his contention that Meyrick was expelled. Atmore says he fell into outward sin, but it was after he secured episcopal ordination and had withdrawn from the Methodists, p. 270.

and seventy-nine died in the work. In other words, sixty percent of the first generation of Methodist preachers left the work either voluntarily or by expulsion, whereas, only forty percent remained in full time service until their death. Of the four hundred and sixty assistants in the second generation, one hundred and forty-five departed from the work, fifteen were expelled, and three hundred died in the work.⁶ This time the figures are almost reversed--thirty-five percent left the work either voluntarily or by expulsion, whereas, sixty-five percent served until their death. The continual development of the institution of lay preaching over the fifty year period is evidenced by the growing stability of the travelling assistants.

5. Why Some Left the Work

The question arises, what happened to the large number (252) of Wesley's ~~early~~ assistants who departed from him and why did they leave? The causes of their departure were numerous, but the principal ones were these: (1) Ill health. The hardships and exposure suffered by many an early itinerant were more than the body could bear. Some sacrificed their health on the altar of service and were then forced to retire.

⁶ Those still living in 1813 when Myles's fourth edition was published, twenty-two years after 1791, are assumed to have died in the work.

(2) Persecution. When a man became a Methodist preacher in the early days, he accepted the position of the most vulgar person in the kingdom and faced the dreadful ferocity of the mob. It is regrettable yet in no way surprising to see some of the faint-hearted shrinking before the great tide of ill-treatment and abuse. (3) Home and family responsibilities. The financial support of the average preacher was often not sufficient to maintain him alone, thus the suffering of many preachers' wives and children in those first days of Methodism was deplorable. Many assistants were forced to sacrifice their beloved work of preaching and return to the work bench or the field to earn bread for those who depended upon them to provide. (4) Conflicts of thought. The doctrines of Antinomianism and Calvinism were very much alive among the evangelicals of that day. Many of their powerful arguments won converts from among Wesley's helpers. But the doctrines of "stillness" and "election" were never at home in the Methodist Societies, and their adherents soon found their way to more homogeneous communions. (5) Loss of zeal. It is unfortunate, but true, that some were subject to a diminishing of their zeal, and after a few years gave up the work entirely.

What happened to those who left the itinerancy? Myles says that twenty-five were ordained into the Church of England. "Many others of Wesley's preachers," says Henry Bett, "became ministers of various Dissenting churches. The number is

uncertain, but it must have been fairly considerable."⁷ A few entered the learned professions like medicine and teaching while the rest returned to their old trades. Of that large number who were forced to retire because of illness and home responsibilities, the majority continued their association with Methodism and usually served as local preachers as long as their strength enabled.

But it is time now to consider those three hundred and seventy-nine travelling preachers who willingly faced difficulties, dangers, and hardships and labored incessantly as assistants of Wesley until death carried them into an eternal peace and rest.

II REPRESENTATIVE LIVES

1. Artisan -- John Nelson, 1707-1774

When seeking a representative of the artisan class from which the vast majority of the early lay preachers sprang, the figure of John Nelson stands above all. The Yorkshire stonemason is one of the few early lay preachers who is known in the present day. His sterling character and incomparable labors still undimmed after two centuries make him a necessary choice.

John Nelson's autobiography appears first in The Lives

⁷ Henry Bett, "The Alleged Illiteracy Of The Early Methodist Preachers," Proceedings, XV, p. 89.

Of ~~The~~ Early Methodist Preachers, entitled, An Extract of John Nelson's Journal.⁸ The almost universal appraisal of this volume is that it is ". . . entitled to a place beside Bunyan's Grace Abounding."⁹ A. E. Keeling in her life of Nelson has said of him:

As a master of the 'noble vulgar tongue' of plain, strong, nervous English, Nelson deserves to rank only second to Bunyon; and though he lacked the instinctive literary skill which guided the great Dreamer in shaping his matchless allegories, and though his narrative is as artless as a story told by a child, it is hardly in this respect inferior to the Grace Abounding, and like it, bears the stamp of absolute sincerity and truth.¹⁰

It is impossible to retell the life of Nelson and not violate the simplicity and power of his story. One who would really catch the flavor and spirit of the life and work of the early lay preachers should certainly read Nelson's Journal in its entirety.

John Nelson was a powerful man of a robust physique and a commanding appearance. One day as he marched through Sunderland with a company of soldiers, a bystander remarked, "That is the Methodist mentioned in the newspapers, for his look is not like other men's."¹¹ He not only stood head and

⁸ The complete title is: An Extract of John Nelson's Journal; Being an Account of God's Dealing With His Soul From His Youth To The Forty-second Year of His Age, and His Working By Him: Likewise the Oppressions He Met With From People of Different Denominations.

⁹ A New History of Methodism, vol. I, p. 312.

¹⁰ Annie E. Keeling, John Nelson, p. 3.

¹¹ Lives, I, p. 128.

shoulders above his companions in stature, but before he spoke a word he was distinguished from the crowd by the reflected radiance of Christ that shown upon his countenance. After Nelson was illegally impressed for the army under the "vagrant clause," his commanding officer said to him, "The first time that I ever saw you, I saw you were no vagrant. . . ." ¹² His character was of such a pure and open quality that few high or low, rich or poor failed to recognize and respect him for what he was. Southey, whose attitude toward the Methodist lay preachers is well known, says that, "John Nelson had as high a spirit and as brave a heart as ever Englishman was blessed with." ¹³ Nelson's labors were almost apostolic in their range and results. He was not only one of Methodism's earliest lay preachers, he was one of its greatest.

John Nelson was born of humble parents sometime in October, 1707, in the village of Birstal, Yorkshire. His father was a stonemason; and though he gave his son little formal education, he trained him carefully in the art of stonemasonry. Many times during his life as an itinerant preacher Nelson was forced to hew stone to earn bread for his family during his spare hours; but his skillful hands made short the time away from his duties as an assistant.

¹² Lives, I, p. 130.

¹³ Robert Southey, The Life of Wesley And Rise And Progress of Methodism, vol. II, p. 38.

As a youth John suffered severe mental torment as a result of his own fears. He relates the following incident:

When I was between nine and ten years old, I was horribly terrified with the thoughts of death and judgment, whenever I was alone. One Sunday night, as I sat on the ground by the side of my father's chair, when he was reading the twentieth chapter of the Revelation, the word came with such light and power to my soul, that it made me tremble, as if a dart were shot at my heart. I fell with my face on the floor, and wept till the place was as wet, where I lay, as if water had been poured thereon.¹⁴

Then follows a frighteningly vivid product of his ever keen imagination. These youthful dreams and visions about hell and heaven returned again and again to torture his tender conscience.

Nelson was a man of strong emotions. His love for God carried him to such pinnacles of devotion that he would have willingly laid down his life for Him (which upon several occasions he almost did). Or on the other hand, an overpowering remorse for his sinfulness could drive him into the black pits of desolation and despair. A man of such violent passions could easily be carried into excesses. He writes:

When I was about nineteen, I found myself in great danger of falling into scandalous sins; and I prayed, I believe, twenty times that God would preserve me, and give me a wife, that I might live with her to His glory. He heard my prayer, and delivered me out of many dangerous temptations; for which I praise His holy name.

The first time I ever saw my wife was at Tonge, where I was going to build the new church. I did not know who she was, nor where she came from; but, at first sight, I said in my mind, "That is the woman I asked of God in prayer;" and I fully determined, if I got married, I would live to His glory.¹⁵

¹⁴ Lives, I, p. 5.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

His marriage proved a great blessing and a source of genuine happiness to him throughout life.

Following his marriage, Nelson spent several years in London restlessly searching for happiness. When he returned to the country for the sake of his wife's health, he could not long remain and made immediate plans to return to the great city. He says, "Several asked me, 'Why I would go again, since I might live at home as well as anywhere in the world?' My answer was, 'I have something to learn that I have not yet learned. . . .'"¹⁶--and so he did have important things to learn about the love of God for man and the great salvation through Jesus Christ. Nelson made his way to London and says:

When I got there, I fell to work presently, and all things prospered that I pursued. . . . I said to myself, "What can I desire that I have not? I enjoy as good health as any man can do; I have as agreeable a wife as I can wish for; I am clothed as well as I can desire; I have, at present, more gold and silver than I have need of; yet still I keep wandering from one part of the kingdom to another, seeking rest, and cannot find it."¹⁷

His search for peace intensified to a feverish pace, and his despair increased proportionately. He says, "I went from church to church but found no ease."¹⁸ Both days and nights were spent in the deepest anguish. His conviction of sin was

¹⁶ Lives, I, p. 10

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 11.

overwhelming. At last he heard John Wesley who became the messenger of peace and light to his dis^traught soul. Joyful memory and sincere gratitude made his hand masterful when he described that event:

. . . I was like a wandering bird, cast out of the nest, till Mr. John Wesley came to preach his first sermon in Moorfields. O, that was a blessed morning to my soul! As soon as he got upon the stand, he stroked back his hair, and turned his face towards where I stood, and I thought fixed his eyes upon me. His countenance struck such an awful dread upon me, before I heard him speak, that it made my heart beat like the pendulum of a clock; and, when he did speak, I thought his whole discourse was aimed at me. When he had done, I said, "This man can tell the secrets of my heart: he hath not left me there; for he hath showed the remedy, even the blood of Jesus." Then was my soul filled with consolation, through hope that God for Christ's sake would save me; neither did I doubt in such a manner any more, till within twenty-four hours of the time when the Lord wrote a pardon upon my heart.¹⁹

He first heard Wesley preach "a little after Mid-summer;" but, "It was three weeks after Michaelmas before I found the true peace of God. . . ," says Nelson.²⁰ This was in the year 1739.²¹

Following his conversion, Nelson underwent a period of uncertainty, doubt, and temptation that lasted for over a

¹⁹ Lives, I, p. 14.

²⁰ Loc. cit.

²¹ Nelson says that this was John Wesley's "first sermon in Moorfields." The first recorded sermon at Moorfields was on June 17, 1739. Wesley says: "I preached, at seven, in Upper Moorfields, to (I believe) six or seven thousand people, on, 'Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.'" (Journal, II, p. 223). This was probably the date that Nelson was referring to.

year. He says, ". . . the dragon stood ready to devour my new-born soul."²² The dragon at that particular time was his master's chief foreman who demanded that he work on the Sabbath in order to complete the stonework on the Treasury Building by a specified date. It was common, even in those days, to work on the Sabbath for His Majesty when haste was required. But John's religion forbade work on Sunday, and he knew no half measures. He stoutly maintained that he ". . . would not work upon the Sabbath for any man in England, except it were to quench fire, or something that required the same immediate help."²³ The foreman replied, "Religion has made you a rebel against the King." "No, sir;" said Nelson, "it has made me a better subject than ever I was. . . . The greatest enemies the King has are the Sabbath-breakers, swearers, drunkards, and whoremongers; for these pull down God's judgments upon both King and country."²⁴ Told that he would lose his job if he did not obey orders, he replied, ". . . I am determined not to break the Sabbath; for I will run the hazard of wanting bread here, before I would run the hazard of wanting water hereafter."²⁵ The end of the matter was that he neither worked nor lost his job, and the plans for Sunday labor on the project were discontinued. "So I see,"

²² Lives, I, p. 20.

²³ Ibid., p. 20.

²⁴ Loc. cit.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 21.

says Nelson, "it is good to obey God, and cast our care upon Him. . . ."26

The zealous stonemason became an everyday-evangelist, saying, ". . . I could not eat my morsel alone."27 He wrote to his wife and friends in Birstal telling them about the wonderful salvation that had come to him, urging them to seek the same mercy that he had found. He began to exhort and reprove his fellow workers so that none would swear in his presence. Out of his meagre earnings, he actually "hired" one of his fellow workmen to go and hear John Wesley preach. The experiment proved so successful that afterwards the man told him that ". . . it was the best thing for him and his wife that ever man had done for them."28 Christianity, as revealed in the vivid untaught imagination of this simple mason, is beautifully expressed in the description of his own experience: "My soul seemed to breathe its life in God as naturally as my body breathed in the common air."29

Just before Christmas in 1740, almost a year and a half after his conversion, Nelson felt impelled by dreams and visions to return to Birstal. There he found opposition on every side towards his newly found faith. His wife desired him either to stop reproofing and abusing their neighbors or to go back to London where this strange malady had come upon him.

26 Lives, I, p. 22.

27 Loc. cit.

28 Ibid., p. 25.

29 Loc. cit.

In the vigorous disputes that ensued, his friends and relatives who dared to engage him ~~were~~^{had} lost before they^{had} begun, for as a controversialist Nelson had few peers. He studied the scriptures and prayer book assiduously. His apt and always ready quotations from these sources interspersed by a quick wit forced many a more learned antagonist to retire in utter defeat. Said one clergyman, "You have too good a memory for me."³⁰ When his mother told him that his head was turned, he replied, "and my heart too, thank the Lord."³¹ After a long contest with a clergyman during which the latter had worked himself into a ~~lather~~ of rage, Nelson calmly said:

Sir, suppose you had been inwardly moved by the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel: if the outward ordination were refused you, when you believed yourself called according to the will of Christ to preach, would you forbear preaching? that is, would you obey man or God? "I suppose," said he, "you think you have put a hard question to me." But, hard or easy, he never answered; and I cannot remember that I ever saw him since. Just as he went away, he challenged me to go into a room with him; but I said, "I have done fighting, sir."³²

Although Nelson was an ardent defender of the faith, he was not solely a controversialist; he was filled with love in his heart toward God and all men. "I found it always in my mind," he said, "not to let any depart that came to dispute with me till we had prayed together."³³ With such a spirit and in such a cause, it is not surprising that soon his

³⁰ Lives, I, p. 85

³¹ Ibid., p. 37

³² Ibid., p. 117.

³³ Ibid., p. 42.

brother, his wife, and many of his neighbors were ". . . brought to experience the redeeming love of Christ." Soon a small society was formed and began to meet regularly under his leadership. He began to exhort among the societies of Benjamin Ingham. But his lot was not easy. Harassed on every side by the doctrine of "stillness" and with many of his own followers falling victim to the "German wolves," Nelson was almost at his wit's end and desperately longed to hear the truth proclaimed. He was urged by Samuel Mitchell and others to stand up and preach the "true doctrine" himself. After frequent refusals, he fell into fervent prayer lying prostrate upon his face, and says:

I now began to be ashamed before the Lord, when I considered how wonderfully He had dealt with me; so that the tears began to flow, and my heart was broken within me. Then I said, "I am not my own, but Thine: therefore, Thy will be done in me, on me, and by me." In that instant the cloud broke, and the Sun of Righteousness arose on my soul: so that I cried out, "Lord, continue with me as Thou art now, and I am ready to go to hell and preach to devils, if Thou require it." Then I came home expecting the people to be gone; but they were waiting about the door of my house. I got up and preached to them, and that night two men declared that God for Christ's sake had forgiven all their sins.³⁴

Launched upon his preaching career and completely alienated from Ingham and the "still brethren," he longed for the counsel and fellowship of Wesley. "I thought, after I had done, if I had had ten pounds, I would have given them for one

³⁴ Lives, I, pp. 49-50.

hour's conversation with Mr. John Wesley. . . ."³⁵ His long-ing continued and he says:

One night, after a day of fasting, I dreamed that Mr. John and Mr. Charles Wesley were both sitting by my fire-side, and that Mr. John said, "I will stay but a few days now; for I must go into the North, and return at such a time and stay with you a week." The next day, when I told it, one said, "If thou hast dread^{me} so, they will certainly come." I replied, "I no more expect them than I expect the King to come." But in a few months after they came, and sat in the very posture I dreamed; and Mr. John Wesley spoke the very words.³⁶

Nelson wrote to Wesley, whom he called his "father in the Gospel," asking for instructions about how to proceed with the work that was growing so rapidly under his efforts. Wesley replied that he would be at his house the next week. Nelson was ". . . melted into tears before the Lord." Wesley's visit³⁷ was a joy and blessing to this devoted servant who received through it both the guidance and sympathetic sanction of his work he so desperately needed.

Nelson's activities then began to expand. He made longer excursions into the surrounding countryside preaching and organizing societies. His fame was soon noised abroad. But with his growth in popularity in one group, he acquired the antagonism of another. Soon the forces of the established interests began to oppose this new kind of rebel who want about the country disturbing the "peace" and "contentment" of the

³⁵ Lives, I, p. 50.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 56.

³⁷ Journal, III, p. 11, May 25, 1742.

working masses. That opposition was not long in becoming violent. On his way to Leeds one day to answer an invitation to preach he was warned that a company of men there had sworn to kill him if he attempted to preach in that city. With that dogged Yorkshire chin even more firmly set and with eyes flashing, he replied, "They must ask my Father's leave; for if he have any more work for me to do, all the men in the town cannot kill me till I have done it."³⁸ There is a familiar ring of those famous words, "a man's immortal till his work is done."

Preaching one day at the Cross in Manchester, he says, ". . . when I was in the middle of my discourse, one at the outside of the congregation threw a stone, which cut me on the head: however, that made the people give greater attention, especially when they saw the blood run down my face; so that all was quiet till I had done, and was singing a hymn. Then the constable came and seized me and Mr. Bennett. . . ."³⁹ The most barbarous story of all occurred one Easter Sunday several years later when Nelson was preaching at Hepworth Moor amid a shower of stones. His congregation was forced to flee before the onslaught. He says:

. . . as I was going away, a piece of a brick struck me on the back of my head, and I fell flat on my face, and must have lain for some time, had not two men lifted me up; but

³⁸ Lives, I, p. 62.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 64.

I could not stand for some time. The blood ran down my back quite into my shoes; and the mob followed me through the city, swearing they would kill me when they got me out of it.⁴⁰

That they almost did. After a temporary respite in the house of an unknown Samaritan, he was attacked again by a man who swore to kill him. Nelson says:

. . . as I made no resistance, he threw me down, and leaped with his knees on my belly several times, till he had beaten the breath out of me, and set my head a-bleeding again. He then went to the gentlemen that hired him and the other man to kill me, and said, "Gentlemen, I have killed the preacher: he lies dead in the croft."⁴¹

Then the mob led by the minister's son returned to see for themselves if it were so. Having half recovered his senses, Nelson was staggering back into the street where he was again knocked down ". . . eight times;" he said, "and when I lay on the ground, not being able to get up, they took me by the hair of the head, and dragged me upon the stones for nearly twenty yards. . . ." All the while others were kicking and gouging and ". . . six of them got on my body and thighs, to tread the Holy Spirit out of me, as they/said."⁴² Finally, they determined to put an end to him by dropping him into a well. But as they dragged him toward the place, they were temporarily restrained by several gentlewomen who were passing. During the confusion some of Nelson's friends got him into a house and to safety. It was a miraculous escape, and it is unbelievable

⁴⁰ Lives, I, p. 160-161.

⁴² Ibid., p. 163.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 162.

that on the following day he could write, ". . . I was not so sore as I expected; for I set out to meet Mr. Wesley, and was enabled to ride forty miles that day."⁴³ What resilience and strength!

The suffering this soldier of Christ endured at the hands of the mob is frightful to comprehend; but he did not bear the cross alone. While Nelson was on one of his itinerant journeys, his wife accompanied a group of others to Wakefield to hold a service. There the mob attacked the preacher and followed the little band out of town into the fields. Mrs. Nelson turned and rebuked their persecutors. The men, half ashamed, turned back to the village. But that was not the end of the cruel story:

... . the women followed them till they came to a gate, where they stopped them: they damned her, saying, "You are Nelson's wife, and here you shall die." They saw she was big with child; yet beat her on the body so cruelly, that they killed the child in her womb, and she went home and miscarried directly. This treatment she had reason to remember to her life's end; but God more than made it up to her, by filling her with peace and love.⁴⁴

Nelson's uncomfortable way of rebuking sin and sinners, high and low, in season and out of season, increased the opposition to his labors. Finally, "the parson and the alehouse keepers," those who were most opposed to his "irregular" preaching, plotted to have Nelson pressed for military service. He

⁴³ Lives, I, p. 164.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 79.

was warned time and again to cease his activities; but his answer was always, "I cannot fear; for God is on my side, and His word hath added strength to my soul this day: and if I fall into the hands of wicked men, God shall be glorified thereby; and when He hath proved me in the furnace, He will bring me forth as Gold."⁴⁵ Nelson continued, ". . . hewing stone in the day-time, and preaching every night."⁴⁶ But, at last, on May 4, 1744, the inevitable happened, ". . . Joseph Gibson, the constable's deputy, (an alehouse-keeper, who found his craft was in danger,) pressed me for a soldier,"⁴⁷ under the vagrant clause of the Parliamentary impressment law. Needless to say, the whole hearing procedure was a farce. His minister testified falsely against him and none were allowed to testify for him, till he was impelled to say, "So, gentlemen, I see there is neither law nor justice for a man that is called a Methodist; but all is lawful that is done against me. I pray God forgive you; for you know not what you do."⁴⁸ Nelson's hearing before the court and his sufferings as a soldier are a curious commentary on the social conditions of England outlined in the first chapter.

The march from Birstal to York was much like a procession of both triumph and disdain. At times scores followed along the road beside him weeping and listening to his discourses.

⁴⁵ Lives, I, p. 95.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 92.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 95

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 97.

At night hundreds would gather outside the dungeon windows to hear his words of comfort and life.

I thought (says Nelson) of the Pilgrim's Progress: for hundreds of people in the street stood and looked at me through the iron grate, and were ready to fight about me. Several would have given bail for me, if they would let me out; but I was told one hundred pounds were refused, which were offered by a stranger for me. I am too notorious a criminal to be allowed such favours; for Christianity is a crime which the world can never forgive.⁴⁹

But all was not triumph; for as he was marched through York where his reputation as one of those new, fanatical, much-hated Methodists was known, he was subjected to the most abusive language by the mobs that lined the streets. This time, however, he was protected from bodily violence by the army of which he was then an unwilling part.

Nelson, though forced into the ranks, still held that a red coat did not discharge him from his obligations as a preacher. He continued to preach and rebuked his astonished officers to their face for their cursing.⁵⁰ For anyone who has been in an army, it is almost incredible that the following incident could ever have occurred:

When I was before these officers, and heard such language, I thought hell could not be much worse than the company I was in. I asked them, "Do you believe that there is a God, and that he is a God of truth?" They said, "We do." I answered, "I cannot believe you, I tell you plainly." "Why so?" I replied, "I cannot think that any man of common understanding, who believes that God is true, dares

⁴⁹ Lives, I, p. 104.

⁵⁰ W. H. Fitchett, Wesley And His Century, p. 211.

take His name in vain; much less do you believe that God can hear you when you pray to Him to damn your souls. Now, suppose God should grant you the damnation you pray for, what miserable wretches would you be! Do you know that you must one day appear before that God who will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain?

As I reasoned with them about a future state, they seemed to shrink as if I had thrown fire at them; but they soon put away the conviction, and said, "You must not preach here; for you are delivered to us for a soldier, and must not talk so to us who are officers." I answered, "There is but one way to prevent me." They asked, "What is that?" I replied, "It is to swear no more in my hearing."⁵¹

An uncomfortable soldier this! But these were not all of his strange ideas. If ever a man was out of place, John Nelson was out of place in the army. Christ so possessed his heart that he would not train to kill. He flatly refused to take up arms. Soon he found himself before a court-martial. The officer in charge addressed him, "Sir, you need not find fault with us: for we must obey our orders; which are to make you act as a soldier."⁵² Nelson replied:

"I shall not fight; for I cannot bow my knee before the Lord to pray for a man, and get up and kill him when I have done. I know God both hears me speak and sees me act; and I should expect a lot of a hypocrite, if my actions contradict my prayers."⁵³

Thus began Nelson's irregular life in the army. The next morning he was ordered on to the drill field where the officers commanded a Corporal to gird him with "a gun and other warlike instruments." Nelson asked:

⁵¹ Lives, I, p. 105-106.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 109.

⁵² Ibid., p. 108.

"Why do you gird me with these warlike habiliments? for I am a man averse to war, and shall not fight, but under the Prince of Peace, the Captain of my salvation; and the weapons He gives me are not carnal like these." "Well," said they, "but you must bear these, till you can get your discharge." "As you put them on me," I answered, "I will bear them as a cross, and use them as far as I can without defiling my conscience; but that I will not do for any man on earth."⁵⁴

And defile that conscience he never did!

One youthful ensign set himself to suppress this strange recruit and showed much ingenuity in contriving insults and cruelties to be inflicted upon him. Of his tormentor Nelson said, "As Saul hunted David, so has this man hunted my soul."⁵⁵ Under such provocation a bit of the old unregenerate Nelson emerges for a moment:

This caused a sore temptation to arise in me, to think that an ignorant wicked man should thus torment me in the street and prison, and I was able to tie his head and heels together. I found an old man's bone in me; but the Lord lifted up a standard, when anger was coming in like a flood, else I should have wrung his neck to the ground, and set my foot upon him; which would have brought a reproach upon the Gospel, and wounded my own soul. But God is good to me; for He showed me the danger, and delivered me from it in a moment. Then I could look upon him with pity, and pray for him from the ground of my heart.⁵⁶

Nelson's influence during his brief stay in the army was truly remarkable. He won the admiration and respect of most of the men and many of the officers. Once when he had been spitefully given sentry duty on Sunday by the young ensign, he remarks, "I believe ten men offered to stand for

⁵⁴ Lives, I, p. 110.

⁵⁶ Loc. cit.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 126.

me. . . ."57 On a long hard march, he says, at least
 ". . . twenty offered to carry the gun for me, or anything
 else I had."58 The major in command of the regiment said,
 "I wish all the men in our regiment would behave as well as
 Mr. Nelson has done since he has been amongst us: it would
 be better for us and them too."59 His lieutenant said,
 "Indeed he has done much good since he came among us: for we
 have not had one-third of the cursing and swearing in the
 regiment which we had before he came: and he has given me
 several private exhortations, and some of their (Methodist)
 books; and I thank him for them, and for his advice, for they
 are good."60 His commanding officer said, "I wish I had a
 regiment of such men, save that one, his refusing to fight:
 I would not care what enemy I had to meet, or where my lot
 were cast."61 There are indications that some of Nelson's
 influence remained even after he left the ranks. Five years
 after his release, John Wesley, while preaching at Athlone,
 found among his congregation, ". . . many soldiers--the re-
 mains of the regiment wherein John Nelson was--and seven or
 eight officers. They all behaved well and listened with deep
 attention."62

57 Lives, I, p. 129.

58 Ibid., p. 127.

59 Ibid., p. 134.

60 Ibid., p. 135.

61 Loc. cit.

62 J. Wesley, Journal, III,
 p. 397, May 3, 1749.

Through the influence of the Countess of Huntingdon and the Earl of Stair, John Nelson was discharged on July 28, 1744.⁶³ But after the first flush of joy over his release, his soul was cast down within him, for he returned to find that Richard Viney had been among his flock preaching German "stillness." "They told me," mourned Nelson, "they did not want the law or work-preaching any more. . . that neither Mr. Wesley nor I knew how to build up souls as well as Mr. Viney did."⁶⁴ He continued, "When I saw such havoc made among the flock by his soft words and fair speeches, my soul was distressed within me, so that I could not eat my bread. I threw myself on the ground, and wished for death, saying, 'Lord, why hast thou suffered me to come back to this evil?'"⁶⁵ Though Nelson soon won most of his converts back into "the light of true religion," his days of distress and hardship were never over. Times of disappointment and cruel persecution continued to stalk his pathway.

The physical hardships and privations of those early days, likewise, form a heroic yet tragic chapter in the life of John Nelson. Once when he was called to London by Wesley, his clothes were so shabby his wife said in a very "wifely" way that he

⁶³ See Richard Viney's Diary, 1744, Proceedings, XV, p. 194 for the first abortive attempt to release Nelson. Also p. 195n.

⁶⁴ Lives, I, p. 139.

⁶⁵ Loc. cit. .

". . . was not fit to go anywhere. . ." as he was.⁶⁶ After clothes were almost miraculously provided, he ". . . set out for London on foot." On a journey through Cornwall with John Wesley, Nelson relates:

. . . Mr. Wesley and I lay on the floor: he had my great-coat for his pillow, and I had Burkitt's Notes on the New Testament for mine. After being here near three weeks, one morning, about three o'clock, Mr. Wesley turned over, and, finding me awake, clapped me on the side, saying, "Brother Nelson, let us be of good cheer: I have one whole side yet, for the skin is off but one ~~one~~ side." We usually preached on the commons, going from one common to another, and it was but seldom any one asked us to eat and drink. One day. . . Mr. Wesley stopped his horse to pick the blackberries, saying, "Brother Nelson, we ought to be thankful that there are plenty of blackberries; for this is the best country I ever saw for getting a stomach, but the worst that ever I saw for getting food. Do people think we can live by preaching?"⁶⁷

Mary Bosanquet, who became Mrs. John Fletcher, was, with her husband, a close friend of John Nelson's during the last years of his life.⁶⁸ Mrs. Fletcher has left the following appraisal of the man:

He was an extraordinary man for tenderness of conscience, watchfulness over his words, and especially for self-denial and rigid temperance. He made it a rule to rise out of bed about twelve o'clock, and sit up till two, for prayer and converse with God: then he slept till four; at which time he always rose. Many of his friends at Leeds observed him to be more lively, both in preaching and conversation a few days before his death, than ever.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Lives, I, p. 72.

⁶⁹ Lives, I, p. 178.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 74

⁶⁸ See Annie Keeling, op. cit., pp. 141-142

John Nelson served Wesley as a "son in the gospel" for over thirty years. He was a faithful son. He never veered from the doctrines of Methodism and was loyal to his death in 1744. He was an unlettered man and called himself an "unpolished tool." After an examination of a number of his manuscript letters in the large collection at the Methodist Book Room, it is clear that his formal education was poor. His writing was not good and his spelling almost unbelievably bad. But his natural gift of an interesting and dramatic style is marked. Though Nelson was unlearned in a scholastic sense, he was endowed with an abundance of good common sense. As Wesley said of several of his preachers, "in the one thing which they profess to know, they are not ignorant men."⁷⁰ Nelson was exceptionally well-versed in the scriptures and the Common Prayer Book. He knew the tenets of Methodist theology and their foundations in scripture. As he told John Bennet once, "If your experience does not answer to what St. Paul and St. John speak, I shall not regard it."⁷¹ The Bible was his one infallible authority. At times he was even accused of making the Bible his god.⁷²

Nelson's personal devotion to John Wesley was complete and at times touching. He defended him against all attackers

⁷⁰ John Wesley, Works, VIII, p. 221.

⁷¹ Lives, I, p. 63.

⁷² Ibid., p. 54.

and would gladly have given his life for the man who brought life to his tortured soul. Upon meeting Wesley once, he said, "My heart rejoiced to see him; and great reason have I to give God thanks that I ever saw him, who was an instrument in God's hand of plucking me as a brand out of the fire. And I have found him God's messenger for my good ever since."⁷³

Not one of Nelson's discourses has been preserved, but he was evidently a very able preacher. Once early in his ^{army} career his commanding officer asked, ". . . do you make your sermons ready before you go to preach, or do you speak off-hand?" Nelson replied, "I do not study what to say, but speak as the Spirit of God enables me."⁷⁴ As it has been said, however, his study time was spent on the Bible and prayer book. There are many evidences that hundreds and sometimes thousands hung upon the words of this unlettered preacher. His plain blunt style always drove him straight to the point while his good common sense supplied him with convincing arguments well supported by the wealth of scripture truth with which his memory was abundantly furnished. It is clear from his Journal and letters that in relating a story he possessed a special dramatic gift. A quick wit often enabled him to turn an abuse into an instrument for teaching. But in ^afavorable judgement ^{of} Nelson's preaching,

⁷³ Lives, I, pp. 127-128.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 136.

the most reassuring points of all are his own deep religious experience, his absolute sincerity, his great passion for souls, and the power of his personality. His Journal is full of references to his sincere agony over souls that refused to hear or had fallen from grace. No one ever questioned Nelson's absolute sincerity whatever else they might have questioned about him. The power of his personality and his persuasive tongue are evidenced in that scene at Kirkheaton. As he was preaching a noisy mob gathered and threatened to halter and drown him in the river; ". . . but, while my voice could be heard," says Nelson, "they had not power to touch me." It was only after ". . . they went to the clerk's house, and got six large hand-bells and came and rung them round me, so that my voice could not be heard. . ." that they were able to take him.⁷⁵ As the records of his life and work so clearly show, his word was as "a hammer and fire" to those who heard.

The results of Nelson's ministry were manifold. He travelled as an assistant throughout the length and breadth of the land and was instrumental in introducing Methodism into many of the centers such as Leeds, York, Manchester, Sheffield, and Cornwall where it became strongest. It is difficult to exaggerate Nelson's importance in the growth and development of early Methodism. John Wesley had perfect confidence in him and was always happy when their work brought them together.

⁷⁵ Lives, I, p. 158.

In 1751 confronted by numerous problems and especially troubled by the instability of many of his preachers, Wesley said, "But I was revived at the sight of John H(aime), John N(elson), and those who came with them in the evening, knowing they held the truth as it is in Jesus, and did not hold it in unrighteousness."⁷⁶

2. Soldier -- John Haime, 1710-1784

A large number of Wesley's assistants served at one time or another in the armies of England. O. S. Watkins in his Soldiers And Preachers Too has called attention to the fact that, "of those counted worthy to have their biographies included in The Lives Of The Early Methodist Preachers, more than one-fourth were ex-soldiers."⁷⁷ This was neither by accident nor because of any great love for the army on the part of the Methodists; but rather it was due largely to two facts: (1) During the last half of the eighteenth century, England was involved in a constant series of wars.⁷⁸ It is significant that during the whole of John Wesley's great mission, England was either preparing for war, at war, or recovering from the

⁷⁶ John Wesley, Journal, III, p. 516, March 9, 1751.

⁷⁷ O. S. Watkins, Soldiers And Preachers Too, p. 15.

⁷⁸ Spanish War, Oct. 23, 1739, to April 30, 1748; War with France, March 31, 1744, to April 30, 1748; Seven Years' War, June 9, 1756, to Feb. 10, 1763; War with Spain, Jan. 4, 1762, to Feb. 10, 1763; American War, July 14, 1774, to Nov. 30, 1782; War with France, Feb. 6, 1778, to Jan. 20, 1783; War with Spain, April 17, 1780, to Jan. 20, 1783, War with Holland, Dec. 21, 1780, to Sept. 2, 1783; War of the French Revolution began Feb. 1, 1793.

effects of war.⁷⁹ Nearly every able bodied man of that day, not capable through money or influence of staying out, served for awhile in the army. (2) The "pressing" of Methodist preachers for the "crime" of preaching in the fields and houses soon became the settled policy and explains in part the large number that served in the ranks. Watkins in evaluating the situation at that time says:

. . . the very persecution to which Wesley's followers were subjected were the means of bringing the movement into the very midst of His Majesties forces. As one who himself suffered tells us, it was the common cry in town and country, "Press them for soldiers; send them on board a man-of-war; transport them;" and Wesley himself more than once tells us of those who were thus 'pressed' in defiance of all law, 'But it was all one, they were called Methodists; therefore soldiers they must be.' Of the number of private members who were thus drafted into the Royal Navy and the army we have no knowledge, but they must have been numerous, for even amongst the preachers themselves they were not a few who thus suffered. John Slocombe, Thomas Westall, John Healey, Peter Jaco, John Downes, Richard Rodda, are only some of the better known amongst Wesley's itinerants who were thus arrested, and in some cases actually enlisted as soldiers.⁸⁰

But probably the most important and well-remembered soldier-preacher was not an "impressed vagrant" but a volunteer named, John Haime. His life has been chosen to represent this second class of early Methodist lay preachers.

John Haime's autobiography first appeared in the Arminian Magazine in 1780, entitled A Short Account Of God's Dealings With Mr. John Haime.⁸¹ "Satan has so much to do in

⁷⁹ John S. Simon, The Methodist Societies, pp. 178-179.

⁸⁰ O. S. Watkins, op. cit., p. 17-18.

⁸¹ Published in pamphlet form by John Wesley in 1785.

the narrative," says Robert Southey, "that this is certainly a misnomer."⁸² But for drama and force, for interest and inspiration, John Haime's life is second only to that of John Nelson's.⁸³

The one portrait of Haime that has been preserved was taken at the age of seventy and appears with the story of his life. It is evidence of the fact that the art of the eighteenth century was very cruel to its subjects and that the portraits of Wesley's helpers appearing in the Arminian Magazine are often of a dreadful quality. Nevertheless, they would seldom be expected to be the faces of scholars; and sainthood had not yet had time to refine the coarse, strong features of the ploughman, the stonemason, or the private soldier.⁸⁴ Robert Southey has given a vivid, though somewhat cruel, description of the portrait of John Haime:

What organs a craniologist might have detected under his brown wig it is impossible to say, but Lavater himself would never have discovered in those mean and common features, the turbulent mind, and passionate fancy, which belonged to them. Small inexpressive eyes, scanty eyebrows, and a short, broad, vulgar nose, in a face of ordinary proportions, seem to mark out a subject who would have been content to travel a jog-trot along the high-road of mortality, and have looked for no greater delight than that of smoking and boozing in the chimney-corner. And yet John Haime passed his whole life in a continued spiritual agony.⁸⁵

⁸² Robert Southey, op. cit., vol. II, p. 122.

⁸³ John Wesley, Journal, III, p. 116n.

⁸⁴ W. H. Fitchett, op. cit., p. 208.

⁸⁵ Robert Southey, op. cit., vol. II, p. 122.

But Haime's "spiritual ague," with its violent alternations between light and darkness, between exultant raptures and anxious dreads, was the unusual experience of a man whose life was a sincere blessing to thousands of souls. He became one of Wesley's most trusted assistants and travelled far and wide proclaiming the message of salvation.

John Haime was born at Shaftesbury in 1710⁸⁶ of humble parents. He was brought up in his father's employment of gardening. But tiring of this he was bound to his uncle to learn button making. Again he found little satisfaction in his labors and moved on to other fields, saying, "I wrought in many places, but stayed in none; being like the troubled sea, that cannot rest."⁸⁷ During those early years he described himself as being, ". . . very undutiful to my parents, and much given to cursing, swearing, lying, and Sabbath-breaking."⁸⁸ Tempted by blasphemous thoughts, and perpetually in fear of the Devil, Haime could find no comfort in working, eating, drinking, or even in sleeping. At work one day, he says:

. . . the devil broke in upon me with reasonings, concerning the being of a God, till my senses were almost gone. He then so strongly tempted me to blaspheme God, that I could not withstand. He then told me, "Thou art inevitably damned:" and I readily believed him; for I thought, Though I have not cursed God outwardly, yet He looketh at the

⁸⁶ "The Rev. H. Hopkinson Found from the registers that 'John Haymes' was baptized in Holy Trinity Church, Shaftesbury, by S. Phillips, Rector, February 18, 1708. In other entries the spelling is 'Hayme.'" Wesley's Veterans, I, p. 11n.

⁸⁷ Lives, I, p. 269.

⁸⁸ Loc. cit.

heart. This consideration made me sink into despair, as a stone in the mighty waters.

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 If at any time I grew uneasy again, I stifled it by drinking, swearing, card-playing, lewdness, and the like works of darkness, which I then pursued with all greediness. I was hastening on to eternal destruction, when the great tremendous God met me as a lion in the way; and His Holy Spirit, whom I had been so long grieving, returned with greater force than ever. I had no rest day or night. I was afraid to go to bed, lest the devil should fetch me away before morning. I was afraid to shut my eyes, lest I should awake in hell. I was terrified when asleep, sometimes dreaming that many devils were in the room, ready to take me away; sometimes, that the world was at an end, and that I was not ready to appear before the Judge of quick and dead. At other times, I thought I saw the world on fire, and the wicked left to burn therein, with myself among them; and when I awoke, my senses were almost gone.

I was often on the point of destroying myself; and was stopped I know not how. Then did I weep bitterly; I mourned like a dove; I chattered like a swallow.⁸⁹

Little wonder that Southey should say of Haime, ". . . he appears, by his own account, to have been in a state little differing from insanity."⁹⁰ From the twentieth century point of view, as well, he might seem "fit for Bedlam;" but Haime was far from insane. A. Caldecott in his careful psychological study of the lives of the early Methodist preachers, including John Haime's, says at the very outset that ". . . though these young men describe unusually intense emotionality, they were not of ill-balanced nervous systems. . . ."⁹¹ Haime was keenly aware of his sins in the accepted evangelical manner of the eighteenth

⁸⁹ Lives, I, pp. 270-271.

⁹⁰ Robert Southey, op. cit., II, p. 123.

⁹¹ A. Caldecott, "The Religious Sentiment: An Inductive Enquiry," Proceedings of The Aristotelian Society, vol. VIII, p. 78.

century--a century when dreams and visions were very meaningful experiences and were interpreted as the authentic word of God (or the Devil) to the human soul, a century when ghosts and spirits and an embodied Devil were terrifyingly real.

But these were not the worst of his periods of great anguish. One night as John was going to bed he felt he should pray; but as he fell upon his knees he began to consider what he could pray for, "I have neither the will nor the power to do anything good," he said. In desperation he arose and went to bed without a word to God. But he went not to a bed of rest. He mourns:

I never had such a night before. I was as if my very body had been in a fire; and I had a hell in my conscience. I was thoroughly persuaded the devil was in the room; and I fully expected, every moment, that he would be let loose upon me. I judged myself to be one of the worst creatures that God ever made. I thought I had sinned beyond the reach of mercy.⁹²

Later Haime says, while driving a load of bark along a lonely road one day:

. . . I was violently tempted to blaspheme, yea, and to hate God: at length, having a stick in my hand, I threw it toward heaven against God, with the utmost enmity. Immediately I saw in the clear element a creature like a swan, but much larger, part black, part brown. It flew at me, and went just over my head. Then it went about forty yards, lighted on the ground, and stood staring upon me. This was in a clear day, about twelve o'clock. I strove to pray, but I could not. At length God opened my mouth. I hastened home, praying all the way, and earnestly resolving to sin no more. But I soon forgot my resolution, and multiplied my sins as the sands on the seashore.⁹³

⁹² Lives, I, pp. 271-272.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 272.

In this unsettled state of mind, forsaking wife and children, Haime enlisted in the Queen's regiment of dragoons toward the close of 1739. Not long afterwards, John Bunyon's Grace Abounding To The Chief Of Sinners fell into his hands. He read it with the utmost attention, and found that the case almost resembled his own. "I. . . thought it the best book I ever saw;" he said, "and again I felt some hopes of mercy."⁹⁴ With new confidence he went to church regularly in every town to which the army came; but, he says, "I did not hear what I wanted,--'Behold the Lamb of God, who takest away the sin of the world.'"⁹⁵ Lacking the guidance of a wise fellow Christian, once again he fell into sin and despair. There followed then a period of violent fluctuations between a state of grace and a state of conviction. As soon as his tortured soul would walk into the light of God's mercy and peace, darkness would seem to overtake him with the speed of a winter night.

During a visit to the south, he came under the preaching of John Cennick at Deptford. Following the sermon, he poured out the distress of his soul to Cennick, who replied, "The work of the Devil is upon you," and then rode away. "It was of the tender mercies of God," says Haime, "that I did not put an end to my life."⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Lives, I, p. 273.

⁹⁵ Loc. cit.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 276.

Yet I thought, If I must be damned myself, I will do what I can that others may be saved. So I began to reprove open sin, whenever I saw or heard it; and to warn the ungodly, that if they did not repent, they would surely perish. But if I found any that were weary and heavy-laden, I told them to wait upon the Lord, and He would renew their strength. Yet I found no strength myself. . . .⁹⁷

Fortunately, however, he heard Charles Wesley preach at Brentford. After the service, Haime ventured to tell him of his situation. Wiser than Cennick, Charles Wesley encouraged him, and bade him go on and not fear, neither be dismayed by any temptation. The words sank deep and were a great blessing to the earnest pilgrim.

Haime's regiment was ordered to Flanders where he says, ". . . the love of God was shed abroad in my heart. I knew God for Christ's sake had forgiven me all my sins."⁹⁸ With this sense of triumph and joy in his heart, he went into the famous battle of Dettingen in June, 1743, where he withstood the fire of the enemy for seven hours. His faith and courage were both put to the test and neither was found wanting. In the midst of battle after the man on his left had been killed, he says, "My heart was filled with love, peace, and joy, more than tongue can express. I was in a new world. I could truly say, 'Unto you that believe He is precious.'"⁹⁹ After the battle was over, Haime was sent to find the baggage wagons

⁹⁷ Lives, I, p. 276.

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 277-278.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 280.

and became separated from the army. Returning to the field of battle, he says, ". . . such a scene of human misery did I never behold! It was enough to melt the most obdurate heart."¹⁰⁰ To add to his own great misery, it began to rain. After finally locating the English army, he was unable to find his tent or to persuade any of his fellow soldiers to take him in to theirs. "So, being very wet and much fatigued," says Haime, "I wrapped myself up in a cloak, and lay down and fell asleep. And though it still rained upon me, and the water ran under me, I had as sweet a night's rest as ever I had in my life."¹⁰¹

During the winter in Ghent, Haime found two soldiers, John Evans and Pitman Stag, who agreed to take a room with him and to meet every night to pray and to read the holy scriptures. Soon others came and desired to join in their fellowship until they numbered twelve. A society was formed, and Methodism was established in the army!

On February 2, 1744, Haime, feeling the need of help in his new work, wrote John Wesley a long letter detailing the events of the past year and closed with this paragraph:

When we came to winter quarters, there were but three of us joined together. But now, by the blessing of God, we are increased to twelve: and we have reason to believe the hand of the Lord is with us. I desire, for the sake of Him whom we follow after, that you would send us some instructions how to proceed in our little society.

¹⁰⁰ Lives, I, p. 280.

¹⁰¹ Loc. cit.

God is become a mouth to me, and has blessed even my word to some of their souls. All praise, and glory, and honour be unto Him and to the Lamb for ever and ever. From

Your affectionate brother,
J(ohn) H(aime)¹⁰²

Wesley replied with all speed and wisdom:

It is a great blessing whereof God has already made you a partaker; but if you continue waiting upon Him, you shall see greater things than these. This is only the beginning of the kingdom of heaven, which He will set up in your heart. There is yet behind the fullness of the mind that was in Christ; 'righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' It is but a little thing that men should be against you while you know that God is on your side. If He give you any companion in the narrow way, it is well; and it is well if He do not. So much the more will He teach and strengthen you by Himself: He will strengthen you in the secret of your heart. . . . Speak the truth in love, even in the midst of a crooked generation; and all things shall work together for good until the work of God is perfect in your soul.¹⁰³

His words were almost prophecy. Soon their number had grown to twenty, and before long the room could no longer contain them. Eventually the society included three hundred members and six preachers besides Haime. "Oh what a work did God put into my hands!" he said. When he stood up to preach on a hill near their camp, he, ". . . usually had a thousand hearers, officers, common soldiers, and others. Was there ever so great a work before, in so abandoned an army?"¹⁰⁴

Haime's responsibilities were growing with the same speed as his society. He found that he, ". . . had so much

¹⁰² John Wesley, Journal, III, p. 116.

¹⁰³ John Wesley, Letters, II, p. 19.

¹⁰⁴ Lives, I, p. 283.

army duty to do, the society to take care of, and to preach four or five times a day," that it was more than he could perform. "But God soon took care for this also," Haime gratefully acknowledged.

I cried earnestly to Him to clear my way and remove all hindrances. Glory be to His name! He did so: for two years after this time I was entirely at my liberty. I found means of hiring others to do my duty, which proved an unspeakable advantage.¹⁰⁵

The general plan of the Methodists was, as soon as they were settled in a camp, to build a tabernacle containing two, three, or four rooms as they were able and to center their activities there. Relieved of many burdensome army chores, Haime was free to spend and be spent in the work of salvation. Frequently he ". . . walked between twenty and thirty miles a day; and preached five-and-thirty times in the space of seven days."¹⁰⁶ "I had at this time," said Haime, "three armies against me: the French army, the wicked English army, and an army of devils. But I feared them not."¹⁰⁷ Among the most annoying "devils" pitted against him were some of the officers and chaplains. One day an officer asked him what he preached. He answered, "I preach against swearing, whoring, and drunkenness; and exhort men to repent of all their sins, that they might not perish." Just which of these categories of sin

¹⁰⁵ Lives, I, p. 283.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 285.

¹⁰⁷ Loc. cit.

touched the officer most sharply is not certain, but he "flew into a rage," swearing that if Haime were in his power he would have him whipped to death. "Sir," replied Haime, "you have a commission over men; but I have a commission from God to tell you, you must repent of your sins, or perish everlastingly." His commanding officer asked once how he came to preach. Being informed that the Spirit of God "constrained" him, he said, "Then you must restrain that spirit." With absolute sincerity, Haime told him, "I would die first!"¹⁰⁸

But not all of the officers were unfriendly. At Bruges General Ponsonby, over the strong opposition of the chaplains, gave Haime permission to use the English Church for daily services which were very popular with the men. More opposition from the chaplains was aroused when Haime created dissension in the ranks because the sacrament had been so long neglected. The Duke of Cumberland, hearing of it, ordered that the Lord's Supper should be administered every Sunday to one regiment or the other. The Duke also began to inquire about this strange dragoon who was stirring up so much religious interest among the troops and finally called him in for questioning. Fully satisfied with the young man's replies, he bade him "go on" with his work issuing a general order that he should be allowed to preach anywhere unmolested. One day

¹⁰⁸ Lives, I, p. 287.

unknown to the young preacher, the Duke came to hear him expound. Haime, not troubled by the finer applications of Christianity that had worried John Nelson, was in his finest form. The problem of whether he could pray for his French brother and then kill him with an untrammelled conscience, never really occurred to Haime. His sermon that day was given with naive sincerity. He says of it:

I. . . desired the soldiers never to come there, or to any place of public worship, so as to neglect any duty. I exhorted them to be ready at all calls, and to obey those who had the rule over them; and if called out to battle, to stand fast, yea, if needful, fight up to the knees in blood. I said, "You fight for a good cause, and for a good king, and in defence of your country. And this is no way contrary to the tenderest conscience, as many of you found at the battle of Fontenoy; when both you and I did our duty, and were all the time filled with love, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."¹⁰⁹

What officer of what army would not gladly let a man preach such "doctrine?"

The reference to Fontenoy goes back to the spring of 1745. Rumors of a great impending battle were widespread. In those anxious days immediately before the battle, some of the Methodist soldiers were carried to a high pitch of religious fanaticism. "One of our brethern," says Haime, "standing in his tent-door, broke out in raptures of joy, knowing his departure was at hand; and when he went into the field of battle, declared, 'I am going to rest in the bosom of Jesus.'"¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Lives, I, p. 291.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 288.

John Haime's account of the Battle of Fontenoy on May 11, 1745, is entirely unique and, though extremely credulous and frenzied, betrays a vital faith that went deeper than a fanatical froth.

Indeed, this day God was pleased to prove our little flock, and to show them His mighty power. They showed such courage and boldness in the fight as made the officers, as well as soldiers, amazed. When wounded, some cried out, "I am going to my Beloved." Others, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" And many that were not wounded earnestly desired "to be dissolved and to be with Christ." When W. Clements had his arm broken by a musket-ball, they would have carried him out of the battle; but he said, "No, I have an arm left to hold my sword: I will not go yet." When a second shot broke his other arm, he said "I am as happy as I can be out of paradise." John Evans, having both his legs taken off by a cannon-ball, was laid across a cannon to die: where, as long as he could speak, he was praising God with joyful lips.

For my own part, I stood the hottest fire of the enemy for about seven hours. But I told my comrades, "The French have no ball made that will kill me this day." After about seven hours, a cannon-ball killed my horse under me. An officer cried out aloud, "Haime, where is your God now?" I answered, "Sir, He is here with me; and He will bring me out of this battle." Presently a cannon-ball took off his head. My horse fell upon me, and some cried out, "Haime is gone!" But I replied, "He is not gone yet." I soon disengaged myself, and walked on, praising God. I was exposed both to the enemy and to our own horse: but that did not discourage me at all; for I knew the God of Jacob was with me. I had a long way to go through all our horse, the balls flying on every side. And all the way lay multitudes bleeding, groaning, or just dead. Surely I was as in the fiery furnace; but it did not singe a hair of my head. The hotter the battle grew, the more strength was given me: I was as full of joy as I could contain. As I was quitting the field, I met one of our brethren with a little dish in his hand, seeking water. I did not know him at first, being covered with blood. He smiled, and said, "Brother Haime, I have got a sore wound." I asked, "Have you got Christ in your heart?" He said, "I have; and I have had Him all this day. I have seen many good and glorious days, with much of God; but I never saw more of it than this day. Glory be to God for all His mercies!"¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Lives, I, pp. 288-289

Though Haime came through the battle unscathed, it was disastrous to the Methodists. John Evans, Bishop, and Greenwood were killed; William Clements was sent to the hospital with both arms broken; and the other two preachers fell into Antinomianism. Thus, Haime was left alone with the remnants of their flock. Loneliness was never good for his spiritual state. He needed Christian companionship and friendly guidance. For three years he had been confident of his salvation in Christ, but with old companions gone, he says, on "April 6th, 1746, I was off my watch, and fell by a grievous temptation. . . . My fall was both gradual and instantaneous. I first grew negligent in watching and prayer, and in reading the Scriptures,

I then indulged myself more and more; laying out upon my own appetite what I before gave to my poor brethren. I next began to indulge the lust of my eyes, to look at and covet pleasing things; till, by little and little, I became shorn of my strength, "having left my former love."¹¹²

April 6th was on Sunday. The "grievous temptation" to which he fell victim was the buying of some article for a few friends on that Sabbath day while in Antwerp. "I had an inward check," he admits, "but I overruled it, and quickly after became a prey to the enemy. Instantly my condemnation was so great, that I was on the point of destroying myself; God restrained me from this: but Satan was let loose, and followed me by day and by night."¹¹³ Again he was cast headlong into the treacherous Slough of Despond. The next twenty years were spent in the

¹¹² Lives, I, p. 292.

¹¹³ Loc. cit.

almost unending task of climbing out and slipping in again. The pages of description of these fits of despair almost drive one to Southey's conclusion about Haime's sanity. But the secret lies here--very few persons ever knew of these wild flights of imagination and fear that racked his inmost soul. As he has said, "Whatever my inward distress was, I always endeavoured to appear free among the people; and it pleased God to make me fruitful in the land of my affliction."¹¹⁴ "In all my trials, I have, by the grace of God invariably kept to one point, preaching 'repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. . . .'"¹¹⁵ These frenzied contortions of mind and spirit which are so vividly described in his autobiography and which occupy seventy-five percent of the pages, were virtually unknown to his associates. Through all of his fiery trials, Haime continued to lead men to Christ by his earnest preaching and self-giving service. Wesley's comment about being revived at the sight of Haime and Nelson because, ". . . they held the truth as it is in Jesus, and did not hold it in unrighteousness"¹¹⁶ is significant. In spite of all of Haime's excessive condemnation of himself, in the eyes of Wesley his moral life was steadfast, if not wholly blameless. Otherwise, his services would never have been tolerated, much

¹¹⁴ Lives, I, p. 295.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 294.

¹¹⁶ See page 186.

less praised. He never appears to have fallen into any gross sin during this period of uncertainty. To all who saw him, his life was an example of Christian piety.

After returning to England Haime was discharged from the army. Immediately he offered his services as a travelling preacher to Wesley who readily accepted them and placed him on a circuit. The Methodist itinerancy was ideally suited for his spiritual condition. He was filled with his message and "constrained by the Spirit" to preach, yet he was restless and unsatisfied to remain in any one place for long. "On this account," he says, "many thought me unstable. . . as they were wholly unacquainted with the exercises of soul which I laboured under. I thought if David or Peter had been living, they would have pitied me."¹¹⁷

Wesley later took this soldier-preacher as his travelling companion and was a stabilizing influence upon him. When they were separated, he wrote letters of comfort and encouragement. On June 21, 1748, Wesley wrote:

My Dear Brother,--Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which God hath seen good to try you with. Indeed, the chastisement for the present is not joyous, but grievous; nevertheless it will by-and-by bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. It is good for you to be in the fiery furnace: though the flesh be weary to bear it, you shall be purified therein, but not consumed; for there is one with you whose form is as the Son

¹¹⁷ Lives, I, p. 302.

of God. O look up! Take knowledge of Him who spreads underneath you His everlasting arms! Lean upon Him with the whole weight of your soul. He is yours; lay hold upon Him.

Away let grief and sighing flee;
Jesus hath died for thee, for thee.
Mercy and peace shall not forsake you. Through every threatening cloud look up, and wait for happy days.¹¹⁸

Wesley's letters like this one to his preachers were always greatly cherished and especially by Haime who wrote to his "father in the gospel" in 1778:

I have been looking over all your Letters which I have received since the year 1742. I have often read them with Great pleasure; but never with so much as now. The Lord made them such a blessing to me as I cannot express. They fired my soul in such a manner, that if I had had the wings of a dove I would soon have been with you, if you had been in the utmost parts of the world. Love constrains me to acknowledge how greatly I am indebted to you under God. To think how you bore with me, and supported me by your kind Letters, which were a salve for every sore, when I was in the deepest distress. . . ."¹¹⁹

Haime had long been travelling in the wilderness, "a land of deserts and pits, a land of drought and of the shadow of death." "This," he said, "had been my lot for twenty years: a just judgment of the Almighty for my sin."¹²⁰ The thought that must enter every mind is, what a "judgment" for buying a few articles on the Sabbath! Nevertheless, before his death Haime returned at last to that perfect peace of mind that he had known for a short time many years before.

John Haime lived to the splendid age of seventy-six and

¹¹⁸ John Wesley, Letters, II, pp. 150-151.

¹¹⁹ Arminian Magazine, XX, July 1797, pp. 354-355, dated, Whitchurch, June 1, 1778.

¹²⁰ Lives, I, p. 308.

died of a fever that continually increased during the last twelve months of his life. Though his last days were spent in pain, they were not spent in sorrow because ". . . his zeal for the glory of God, and concern for the salvation of sinners, abated not in the least. He preached as long as he was able to speak, and longer than he could stand without support."¹²¹ This humble soldier of Christ died on August 18, 1784.

6.

Like Nelson, not one of John Haime's sermons has been preserved. In both cases this is undoubtedly due to the fact that they never wrote a discourse during their entire lives. "When I began preaching," said Haime once, "I did not understand one text in the Bible, so as to speak from it in (what is called) a regular manner; yet I never wanted either matter or words. So hath God, in all ages, 'chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty.'"¹²² Many references throughout his life show that he was a devoted student of the Bible although he did occasionally read other literature. The early ignorance of the scriptures was quickly overcome. Like Nelson, he virtually became a man of one book but never appears to have attained Nelson's wide knowledge of the Bible. Haime was an emotional preacher who strongly emphasized the negative judgements of God. Once criticized for such preaching, he said:

¹²¹ George Storey, obituary in Arminian Magazine, 1785, see Lives, I, p. 310.

¹²² Lives, I, p. 283.

. . . I continued to thunder out the terrors of the law against the ungodly; although some said I was too positive. Too positive! What! in declaring the promises and threatenings of God? Nay, if I cannot be sure of these, I will say to the Bible, as the devil did to our Lord, "What have I to do with thee?"¹²³

But there is little doubt as to the power of his preaching. Going to his home in Shaftesbury he tells of preaching to "three or four thousand" people. "Surely," he said, "I preached that sermon with the power of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven."¹²⁴ In a few weeks fifty persons were joined together in a society, and soon plans for the construction of a meeting house were under way.

Though Haime had little of Nelson's controversial skill, he did have some of his ability to think quickly in a difficult situation. Heralded before the Magistrates in Shaftesbury one day, Haime was told by the town clerk as a jest that he would not send him to jail if he would work a miracle. Haime quickly replied, "That is already done. Many swearers and drunkards are become sober, God-fearing men."¹²⁵ Like his fellow preachers, Haime endured hardships and such persecution at the hands of the Magistrates with true Christian courage and good cheer.

At best, however, Haime was a one-talent man. His education was slight and his natural gifts were few. But he

¹²³ Lives, I, p. 300.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 303.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 304.

was a mighty instrument in the advance of Methodism. He invested his single talent at compound interest, and God gave the increase. His work in the army and his more than twenty years of service in England and Ireland, were the means of bringing many souls into a saving knowledge of Christ.

3. Middle Class -- Christopher Hopper, 1722-1799

Not all of Wesley's assistants sprang from the plain, rough-hewn classes of England. As it has already been observed, the eighteenth century saw a rapid growth in the middle class. Some of Wesley's most successful preachers were counted among this class. They were men of education and good breeding. They had some of those qualities of refinement and knowledge that gave the Wesleys a peculiar position of respect and honor among the Methodists. One of the very earliest members of this group to become an assistant of Wesley's was a schoolmaster named, Christopher Hopper. Adam Clarke once declared that Hopper was in the strictest sense a great man.¹²⁶ His life has been chosen as representative of this class of helpers.

Hopper's life entitled, "An Account Of Mr. Christopher Hopper," first appeared in the Arminian Magazine of 1781. The first part of it is a running account of his early life

¹²⁶ A New History Of Methodism, vol. I, p. 316.

and Christian experience which is very well written betraying an educated style, but not the self-conscious stilted style so characteristic of the Johnsonian age. He has written in a simple but artful way about the plain truths of his eventful life. The second half of the autobiography is more like a journal in which he very briefly outlines the latter years of his life.

Christopher Hopper, ~~was~~ the youngest son of an eminent farmer in the county of Durham, ^{was} born in the Parish of Ryton on Christmas Day, 1722. His parents were strict and pious members of the Church of England; and the children were all reared in the same strict adherence to the ordinances of the church. The youngest Hopper was catechised twice every week and made to attend every appointed service of the church. At five Christopher was placed under the tutorship of Mr. Alderson, who was "a man of piety and good understanding, **and** taught those under his care, not only the branches of learning he professed, but the fear of God, and the first principles of religion."¹²⁷ Eventually, however, his master, after being lured into a game of cards, ". . . fell into **g**reat distress of mind," says Hopper, "and could not properly attend his school, which was often left to the care of his eldest son and me."¹²⁸ Thus early in life Christopher began his career of teaching. One

¹²⁷ Lives, I, p. 179.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 180.

of the earliest tragedies in his young life was the loss of his beloved master who the following spring, after great anguish and deep despair over his sin, drowned himself. This "melancholy event" brought him to do some serious thinking about "heaven, hell, death, and judgment."

As a youth Christopher was afflicted by a "severe illness" for almost two years until his body had ~~to~~ wasted away to the point of danger. "Mr. Foster, an eminent apothecary, who attended me," said Hopper, "pronounced me incurable."¹²⁹ This alarmed him into even more feverish reading and praying. The Bible became a real source of pleasure and delight. Before long many verses and chapters that had proved most helpful were committed to memory. But still he says that he prayed and sang with fear as he meditated upon his childhood vices:

I had very slight notions of my depraved nature, and the sin of unbelief; but clear view of my actual transgressions. I had been addicted to swear when I was put out of humour; and to lie when I could gain anything by it, or cover or excuse a fault. I had been apt to pilfer among the children when I could do it with a good grace.

I was very proud, and prone to anger; yea, of a cruel disposition. I took a diabolical pleasure in hanging dogs, worrying cats, and killing birds and insects, mangling and cutting them to pieces.¹³⁰

Against all human prognostications, Christopher was restored to health again. With renewed strength, his religious determinations soon vanished, and, as he says, "I quenched the Holy Spirit, who departed, and left me again to the folly of my own

¹²⁹ Lives, I, p. 180.

¹³⁰ Ibid., pp. 180-181.

heart."¹³¹

During Christopher's illness, his father died and the estate was divided between his mother and eldest brother. "As I was the youngest child of the family," he says later, "and had nothing left me, I judged it would be proper to think of some business to procure bread. . . ."¹³² His mother and brother offered to give him a good education; but then, not feeling the value of it, he went to work for a shop keeper instead. Soon tiring of this, he says that at about the age of fifteen, "a project entered into my head that I would be a musician. I told my brother; he approved of it, bought me a violin, and provided me a master."¹³³ This new diversion he pursued with great assiduity for awhile thinking that at last he had found the very thing that would make him happy.

This period of his life was, however, not all spent in practice. According to his own admission, most of his time was spent in "playing, singing, dancing, fishing, fowling, and whatever came next to . . . hand."¹³⁴ Such diversions made money essential. Once again his mind turned to remunerative employment. This time Christopher was employed by his brother as a teamster hauling coal from the mines to the river Tyne over the new "wagon-ways." "I soon made a great proficiency

¹³¹ Lives, I, p. 182.

¹³³ Loc. cit.

¹³² Loc. cit.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 183.

in this slavish and dangerous occupation," he said, "and I was hugely pleased with my new department. Novelty pleases whether a man sits on a throne or a dunghill."¹³⁵ Thus by the means of his new earnings, he was enabled to continue his "worldly diversions" unabated; but, in and through them all, he knew neither happiness nor peace. "I found Satan's service perfect drug^dery," he says, "and all earthly objects empty and vain." "I was not happy; yet I believed there was something that could make me so, but I knew not what it was, or where to find it."¹³⁶ Christopher was shaken into serious thought again by a miraculous escape from a serious accident in his work. "The true light shined on my dark soul," he cried, "and God laid me in the dust. I only wanted a spiritual guide to show me the way; but, alas! I could not find him in the country."¹³⁷

In 1742 Hopper first heard of John Wesley who had come to Newcastle-upon-Tyne in May and had preached to many thousands there for the first time. His sermons created such a stir that they became a topic of conversation throughout the surrounding countryside. Hopper says:

Some time after, his brother Charles came, and preached at Tanfield Cross. I ran with the multitude to hear this strange preacher: when I saw a man in a clergyman's habit, preaching at a public cross to a large auditory, some gaping, some laughing, and some weeping, I wondered what this could mean. When he had concluded, some said, "He is a good man, and is sent to reform our land;" others said,

¹³⁵ Lives, I, pl 183.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 185

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 184.

"Nay, he is come to pervert and deceive us, and we ought to stone him out of our coasts." I said, "If he is a good man, good will be done, and it is plain we want a reformation; but if he is an imposter, he can only leave us as he found us, that is, without hope and without God in the world." I cannot tell what induced me to go so far; but I found I was in danger of being called a Methodist, and was glad to dismiss the conversation with a smile and a piece of drollery.¹³⁸

The Wesleys returned, and by 1743 some of the itinerant preachers were moving about through the country. As a result of these activities, Hopper says, "there was a great clamour about religion among all sects and parties, and I made a bustle among the rest. I said, 'I will read my Bible, say my prayers, go to my parish-church, reform my life, and be good and pious, without the scandal of the cross.' Alas! I did not consider, 'No cross, no crown.'"¹³⁹ The intensity of his search increased, and at last he went so far as to attend the preaching of one of Wesley's earliest helpers, Jonathon Reeves. "The word came home to my heart with energy," he says, "The veil was removed. The true light shined upon me; and I said, 'Alas! I am undone.'"¹⁴⁰ That night he was thoroughly convinced of sin and cried out for divine mercy. Unlike Haime, Christopher Hopper found freedom to say:

I can, I will, I do believe in the only true God, and in Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. I am freely justified. I am saved through faith in the blood of the Lamb. God is now my God in Christ.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Lives, I, p. 185-186

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 188.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 186.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 189.

His conversion was complete. The whole tenor of his life and conversation was new. He was a wonder to his family, to all who knew him, and even to himself. "I found a perfect hatred to sin, and a complete victory over it," he said; "My heart, my tongue, my hands, were now, in my little way, employed for my loving God."¹⁴² In Methodism he had truly found his spiritual home. Its doctrines and discipline exactly fitted his needs and his temperament. He said:

This is Bible religion, scriptural Christianity: let men call it what they please,--'a delusion,' 'enthusiasm,' 'Methodism,' or 'Mohametanism,'--that is nothing to me; hard names do not change the nature of the thing.¹⁴³

So he went on his way rejoicing, smiling in the face of the jibes and ridicule of his old cronies, and living a noble and upright life.

Not long afterwards, John Wesley came to Low-Spenn, preached, and formed a society. Almost at once he saw in Hopper those qualities of leadership that he liked best; he also saw a deeply consecrated young man whose life and service would be an honor to Christ and to Methodism. Wesley made him a class leader and gave him charge over the newly formed society. "I was but a novice," says Hopper, "a young, raw disciple, unskilled in the word of righteousness; but faith in Christ, and the love of God in my heart, overcame all the powers of darkness."¹⁴⁴ His success in the work was impressive.

¹⁴² Lives, I, p. 189.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 190.

¹⁴³ Loc. cit.

The society grew and prospered. His expositions on the scriptures were followed by exhortations to repent and lead the holy life. Soon his fame had spread throughout the countryside. He began to receive invitations to visit and organize other societies in the surrounding villages. Success, likewise, met with these efforts. But all was not ease in Zion. Severe persecution arose against him. Hopper bravely bore the worst that was levelled at him with triumphant joy. He reports, "Several of my fellow-sufferers had shared honest John Nelson's fate already; and I expected to be the next."¹⁴⁵ Though several serious efforts were made to apprehend him, Hopper escaped impressment. But he did not escape the uncertainty of mind that at one time or another must have come upon almost every lay preacher in those early days of bitter persecution and hardship. He says:

When I first set out to do all the good I could, without fee or reward, I did not foresee this violent storm. I began now to consider what latitude I was in; and whether it would not be a point of wisdom to tack about, and steer for some quiet harbour.¹⁴⁶

He was then brought face to face with the call to preach. Contrary to the opinion often advanced that early Methodism was all emotionalism, in a very "Wesley-like" way Christopher Hopper examined himself and all of the external factors in his situation before coming to a decision. He says:

¹⁴⁵ Lives, I, pp. 191-192.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 192.

Let me, then, inquire with prayer and fasting, what reason have I to believe that I am called to preach the Gospel?

1. I have heard and believed the Gospel, and found it to be the power of God to the salvation of my own soul, (Rom. i. 16,) and I believe it to be the powerful means which God hath appointed to reclaim and save lost sinners. 2. I believe all power is given to Jesus Christ in heaven and in earth; therefore He alone hath power and authority to call, qualify, and thrust out labourers into His own harvest. (Matt. xxviii. 18.) Hence I learn that this power cannot be acquired by human art or learning, or purchased with gold or silver. (Acts viii. 20.) 3. I believe those who are called and put into this work by Him shall turn sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. (Acts xxvi. 18.) 4. I have a rational conviction that God hath committed unto me the word of reconciliation. (2 Cor. v. 19.) I have this treasure in an earthen vessel, in a feeble, mortal body; (2 Cor. iv. 7;) that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of man. I find, by daily experience, "we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." (2 Cor. iii. 5.) 5. According to this conviction I have preached the Gospel to sinners dead in sin, and they have been awakened and converted to God. Children of the devil are become children of God, and heirs of eternal life.

Having considered these things, I concluded my call to preach the Gospel was consistent with Scripture, reason, and experience.¹⁴⁷

Thus another lay preacher was born.

Though his work as an evangelist prospered, Hopper's troubles increased. In 1744 he was brought into court ostensibly on the charge of teaching without a license, but the real charge was, ". . . for calling sinners to repentance, and warning the wicked to flee from the wrath to come--an offence that cannot be overlooked by men who know not God!"¹⁴⁸ The result: he was temporarily deprived of his right to teach but no man could stop him from preaching.

¹⁴⁷ Lives, I, pp. 193-194. ¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 195.

Before his conversion, Hopper was deeply in love with Jane Richardson, the daughter of a neighboring farmer. They had been sweethearts from childhood. After his spiritual rebirth, he says:

She had every accomplishment I wanted, but religion! Alas! she was unacquainted with God. This was a bar indeed! I found a desire to break off all correspondence with her, but was afraid she could not bear it. I was greatly troubled, and prayed for Divine direction. God was pleased to hear and grant my request. She was soon awakened, and found peace with God. All objections being removed, on May the 28th, 1745, we were joined together in Ryton church. She was a loving wife, a faithful friend, and a very agreeable companion. She made my joys and sorrows her own. We worshipped God in spirit and truth, and rejoiced in the Son of His love.¹⁴⁹

His devotion to the cause of Christ which made him seriously consider breaking off the engagement ~~w~~ould be called by some rank enthusiasm; but to others it would seem to be a mark of the completeness with which he had given himself to God and to the work to which he had been called.

The exact date ~~when~~ Christopher Hopper became an assistant is not certain. The probability is, however, that he first began to travel in 1746; although several times, in order to obtain sustenance for his family, he was forced to return to school teaching and curtail his preaching activities. "In the year 1746 I removed from Barlow to the preaching-house at Sheephill," he says, ". . . I gave up my soul, body, and substance to my adorable Saviour, and grieved I had no more to give."¹⁵⁰ From this point his labors continued and increased.

¹⁴⁹ Lives, I, p. 196.

¹⁵⁰ Loc. cit.

There is little doubt that Hopper was a powerful preacher and had a splendid hearing almost everywhere he travelled. He says of his activities:

I went from town to town, and from house to house, singing, praying, and preaching the word; and great multitudes followed from place to place, weeping, and seeking Him that was crucified. Great numbers were awakened, and found peace with God, through the blood of the Lamb. I have frequently seen a whole congregation melted into tears, and bowed down before the Lord, as the heart of one man: especially once, when I was preaching in Mr. Lowe's old barn, at Dod-bank, the Lord manifested His great power. He wrought for the glory of His own name; and I stood still and looked on, with loving fear and wonder.¹⁵¹

In the winter of 1748, Hopper travelled into the extreme north of England and was exposed to many severe hardships. He tells about crossing the "quagmires and enormous mountains" in the midst of a blinding snowstorm. When he arrived at his destination, he was met by a human coldness that even surpassed the bitter winds. Hardships and difficulties never ceased to dog his steps. In the following year, he had to commence the work of a school master to stave off starvation. But the work of his Father increased to such proportions that once more he says, "I gave it (school teaching) up, with all other secular employments, and cast myself on the bounty of my Lord and Master."¹⁵² Nothing but sympathy can be felt for these early servants of Christ who sacrificed all earthly security for the sake of the gospel. "In those day," says

¹⁵¹ Lives, I, p. 198.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 199.

Hopper, "we had no provision made for preachers' wives, no funds, no stewards."¹⁵³ The suffering of the families of these itinerants was sometimes dreadful. At first they depended for their existence only on what some poor penitent might put into the hand of the preacher, for then no regular offerings were received. Hopper and his family suffered with the rest. How strong the temptations must have been to forsake the work. He records one such trail of his faith:

My little substance soon failed, and I saw nothing before me but beggary and great afflictions. Sometimes I was carried above all earthly objects, and had a comfortable view of the heavenly country. At other times I was much depressed, and could see nothing but poverty and distress.

I well remember, once on the top of a cold mountain in a violent storm of snow, when the congealed flakes covered me with a white mantle, Satan assaulted me, and pushed me hard to return to my school, or some other business to procure bread. I staggered through unbelief, and almost yielded to the tempter. But as the attack was sudden, so the battle was soon over. The Lord sent these words to my heart like lightning: "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing, Lord." (Luke xxi. 35.) I answered with a loud voice, "Nothing, Lord! nothing, Lord!" All my doubts and fears vanished in a moment, and I went on my way rejoicing!

"Constrain'd to cry by love Divine,
My God, Thou art for ever mine!"¹⁵⁴

What faith! Little wonder that this new religious movement spread so rapidly and made such profound and permanent changes in the life of the people with a company of prophets like Christopher Hopper proclaiming the Word throughout the land.

¹⁵³ Lives, I, p. 200.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 199-200.

In 1750 Hopper accompanied Wesley on his fourth visit to Ireland. The following year he was again Wesley's traveling companion and together they introduced Methodism into Scotland. He says, "This was the beginning of a good work in Scotland."¹⁵⁵ In August of 1755, Mrs. Hopper became suddenly ill and died within a few days. It was a great blow to her husband; but he faced it in a triumphant Christian spirit which was expressed in a long and beautiful letter to George Whitefield giving an account of his wife and her last days. Whitefield replied, "Surely, thought I, affliction makes one eloquent."¹⁵⁶ Never faltering, Hopper continued steadfast in the work. On April 17, 1759, he was happily married again to, ". . . an agreeable person of a fair character." "God made his face to shine upon us," he says, "and blessed us, and amply rewarded me for all my days of mourning. . . ."¹⁵⁷ Again he was tempted to settle and enjoy the comforts and pleasures of home life. He commenced a small business in Newcastle; but says the evangelist, "He showed me that His good work would bring me far more gain in the end than all the shops in Newcastle. So I set out for the north. . . ."¹⁵⁸ For the next thirty years he travelled/unceasingly throughout England, Ireland, and Scotland and was a great instrument in the hand of God.

¹⁵⁵ Lives, I, p. 206.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 210.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 237.

¹⁵⁸ Loc. cit.

In 1780 Hopper writes, "Our Conference began on Tuesday, August 1st, and concluded on the 9th. Our brethren made me president in Mr. Wesley's absence. A poor helpless worm! Superintendent! President!--Great words! I doubt we have not grace to bear them."¹⁵⁹ Just what Hopper meant by this is uncertain because it is clear from the Journal that Wesley was present throughout the Conference, arriving in Bristol several days before the opening session.¹⁶⁰ Neither Tyerman nor Simon record the fact in their accounts of the 1780 Conference.¹⁶¹ The only conclusion that can be drawn is that Wesley from time to time had to be away from the Conference for a few hours and Hopper was chosen by his fellow-preachers to preside and act as president. But it is not likely that Wesley was absent often or for very long.

In 1790 the infirmities of advancing years forced him to retire from the itinerancy. From then until his death, Hopper lived in his own house adjoining the Methodist chapel at Bolton-le-moors. He continued to preach there and in the surrounding country up until a week before his last confinement. He died on March 5, 1802.

¹⁵⁹ Lives, I, p. 219.

¹⁶⁰ John Wesley, Journal, VI, pp. 290-291.

¹⁶¹ Luke Tyerman, op. cit., vol. III, pp. 329ff. and John Simon, The Last Phase, pp. 176ff.

A sermon preached by the Rev. Thomas Cooper upon the death of Christopher Hopper was published in the Methodist Magazine in September, 1803. That account of a contemporary says in part:

He was a great man naturally, being superior to most others in the extent of his mental powers. . . . having risen. . . to a high degree of celebrity as a public speaker. He was a person of an exceedingly quick apprehension, and of so clear an understanding as not to be imposed upon. Though the warmth and fertility of his imagination were obviously great, he. . . so governed it by a sound judgment, as to make it subservient to the grand design of his ministry. To these he added a strong memory. . . . the God of nature had furnished him with all the talents necessary to form the great man, in whatever sphere he might have been called to move.¹⁶²

Hopper's formal education was not extensive. He attended school from five to about thirteen. Nevertheless, he was a good student throughout life and never ceased his studying. Illustrative of that is his decision that the scriptures, which he considered of first importance, could not be properly understood in translation but only in the original. He, therefore, set about the task of procuring a respectable knowledge of both Hebrew and Greek.

In the realm of preaching, Hopper had few peers. Mr. Cooper says:

In most of his public discourses the well-informed hearer would at once perceive the man of genius and of science, as well by their disposition and arrangement, as by the judicious selection of metaphorical illustrations with which they were adorned; so that he was justly esteemed a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.¹⁶³

¹⁶² Methodist Magazine, XXVI, Sept. 1803, pp. 423-424.

¹⁶³ Lives, I, pp. 231-232.

The greatest attestation to his powers as a preacher was the profound and permanent effects he left upon his hearers. Contemporary accounts record the fact that hundreds were convinced and converted under his ministry.¹⁶⁴ His obituary in the Minutes of Conference describes him as, ". . . a Boanerges, a son of thunder: his word was with power, and stout-hearted sinners trembled from time to time under the awful and alarming message his Lord gave him to deliver. He feared the face of no man; he declared the whole counsel of God with clearness and energy wherever he came, and the Lord crowned these labours of His servant with great success."¹⁶⁵ T. E. Brigden in the Proceedings tells about discovering a sermon by Hopper on "Hag. 2:9." After examining it, he says, "It is a model of homiletical arrangement and powerful appeal, and confirms all that is said in Jackson's Lives, of Hopper's ability as a preacher."¹⁶⁶

The large number of letters to Hopper from Wesley filled with the everyday problems of administering the growing organization show how dependent the great leader was upon the advice and assistance of his devoted helper. In fact, Hopper actually became more than a regular assistant. He was given some authority over his fellow-assistants. In 1768 Wesley

¹⁶⁴ Wesley's Veterans, I, p. 173.

¹⁶⁵ Loc. cit.

¹⁶⁶ Proceedings, III, p. 22.

made the appointment formal by writing, "I constitute, Christopher Hopper, by name, Lord President of the North. Enter upon your province, Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmorland, Durham, Yorkshire, and Lincolnshire, without delay."¹⁶⁷ This was largely in connection with his efforts to pay off the debt that then encumbered Methodism. Nevertheless, Hopper had for a number of years before enjoyed the intimate confidence of Wesley and in the north had exercised the authority of Wesley in his absence.

Hopper served in the active ranks of Methodism for over fifty-five years. Yet, says Atmore, "Few public men have preserved a more unblemished character, conducted themselves with greater propriety, or been more justly or generally beloved and respected."¹⁶⁸ Christopher stands as a tall cedar in a goodly forest of the early Methodist preachers.

(a) Gentry -- Robert Carr Brackenbury

Very few of Wesley's itinerants actually came from the social strata above the middle class. A number of the upper class identified themselves with the Methodist movement; some few became local preachers; but almost none became active itinerants. One exception was Robert Carr Brackenbury of

¹⁶⁷ John Wesley, Letters, V, p. 74.

¹⁶⁸ Lives, I, p. 229.

Raithby Hall in Lincolnshire. He was born in 1752 and at an early age became a county magistrate, the owner of several mansions, and the landlord of thousands of acres. Wesley met him in 1776 and gives the following brief account of his spiritual experience:

I went thence to Horncastle and to Spilsby, with Mr. Br(ackenbury). While he was at Cambridge he was convinced of sin, though not by any outward means, and soon after justified. Coming to Hull, he met with one of our preachers. By long and close conversation with him, he was clearly convinced it was his duty to join the people called Methodists. At first, indeed, he staggered at lay preachers; but, after weighing the matter more deeply, he began preaching himself; and found a very remarkable blessing, both on his own soul and on his labours.¹⁶⁹

As one of Wesley's assistants he was enrolled in the Minutes of Conference beginning in 1784 and occasionally accompanied Wesley on his evangelistic tours. There was a great affinity between the two men. It was as warm with affection as a father-son relationship. Many of Wesley's letters to Brackenbury bear witness to his great love for him. He served many profitable years in the Channel Islands and was a great blessing to all those to whom he ministered.

III GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

The three representative biographies just read were quite different in many respects--as different as the lives of three men would ordinarily be. Nevertheless, there was a

¹⁶⁹ John Wesley, Journal, VI, p. 115, July 9, 1776.

certain similarity about their experiences and characters. So it was with almost all of the early Methodist lay preachers. They were individually as different as they could be; yet, they had many experiences of religion and traits of character in common. The remainder of this chapter is concerned with the general characteristics of the total body of assistants.

1. Men of Their Time

In a very real sense the men who became Wesley's assistants were men of their time. They possessed the beliefs and prejudices of the eighteenth century common man; and they were possessed by the fears and superstitions of that frightfully credulous age.¹⁷⁰ They, with Wesley, believed in ghosts and spirits and were most ready to accept, to retell, and even to print the most fantastic stories. After their conversions, they trusted in dreams and visions as direct revelations from God and interpreted all strange happenings and events as God's direct intervention into the affairs of men. For instance, in a letter to Wesley in 1763, John Manners told about a certain curate who ordered him pulled down from the pulpit one Sunday at Setterington. "He threatened in the following week," says Manners, "to banish all the Methodists from town and country. But in going from an entertainment the next Saturday night, he

¹⁷⁰ J. H. Whiteley, Wesley's England, pp. 63ff.

fell from his horse and broke his neck!"¹⁷¹ The moral was so obvious that Manners did not even see the necessity for pointing it out. Stories already recorded in the lives of Nelson and Haime are illustrative of the role that dreams and visions played in the experience of these men.

2. Conversion experiences

In one way, however, these early preachers were not of their age. They broke with the spirit and beliefs of the times in their experience of religion. They forsook the cold legalism of the Deistic era and embraced the warm emotional conception of salvation by faith. It is a strange fact that their initial experiences of this faith, their conversions, were almost universally the same. The process was both gradual and instantaneous. First one was convicted of sin and spent a period of anguish and despair confident that God had no mercy for such an unregenerate character. Then the point of release or conversion usually came in an instant. Suddenly the burden of guilt was lifted. A definite assurance of the forgiving love of God in Christ flooded the soul and brought peace and joy. Sometimes doubts and temptations followed; but through prayer and service a new victory was usually won.

Dr. A. Caldecott in an article in the Proceedings of the

¹⁷¹ Arminian Magazine, V, February, 1782, pp. 103-105, dated Jan. 17, 1763.

Aristotelian Society entitled, "The Religious Sentiment: An Inductive Enquiry," carefully examines the lives of these men being studied from the standpoint of the psychology of religion and draws attention to the great similarity of their religious experiences. He says of the preachers and the records they have left:

. . . they were men capable of self-observation; they were able to describe their observations; and in some important points there is corroboration of what they record. . . . Though these young men describe unusually intense emotionality they were not of ill-balanced nervous systems: they all lived vigorously, and most of them continued laborious pursuits until advanced old age; they were not fretty under disappointments or depressed with the ennui of prematurely worn-out single emotions, the "sorrows of youth," nor were they of melancholy temperament, apt to cherish sadness and gloom, averse to cheerfulness and joy; they struggled against the sadness they experienced in the first stage they describe, with an irresistible conviction that it need not be there, if only joy could be obtained.¹⁷²

Caldecott rightly observes further that, "After the days of conflict and vicissitudes had passed, we see neither unrest nor morbidity, but stability and the concreteness of efficiency and health and well-being."¹⁷³

Alexander Mather, the conscientious baker, agonized in his search for God for more than a year. Finally, while attending a service led by John Wesley, the first time he had ever seen or heard him, he says:

Under that sermon God set my heart at liberty, removing my sins from me, as far as the east is from the west: which the very change of my countenance testified, before my

¹⁷² A. Caldecott, op. cit., pp. 78-79.

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 94.

tongue could utter it. I had no great transport of joy; but my load was gone, and I could praise God from the ground of my heart, all my sorrow, and fear, and anguish of spirit, being changed into a solid peace.¹⁷⁴

John Pawson, after a long period of penitent distress, gives the following account of his release:

I was upon my knees in the middle of the room, and if possible, in greater anguish of spirit than ever. . . . He graciously applied that blessed word to my mind, Isaiah xliii. 1, "Thou art Mine." In a moment I was perfectly delivered from all my guilty fears; my deep sorrow, my extreme distress, was entirely gone. The peace of God flowed into my conscience, and the love of God was shed abroad in my heart abundantly; my whole soul was filled with serious, sacred, heavenly joy; yea, I triumphed in the God of my salvation. . . .

The deliverance which the Lord wrought for me was so great, and the change in my mind was so extraordinary, that I never could doubt of my acceptance with God through Christ to this day. My convictions of sin had been so deep, painful, and of such long continuance, that, when deliverance came, it was not only the more welcome, but also the more clear.¹⁷⁵

Thomas Hanby while still a lad, says, "It pleased Infinite Mercy, while I was praying in a dark place, (greatly terrified for fear I should see the devil,) that the Lord set my weary soul at liberty."¹⁷⁶ Sampson Staniforth was cast down by a deep distress of spirit for some time before he found deliverance. In this dejected state of mind he was assigned sentinel duty at a dangerous post from midnight till two. "I had a fellow-sentinel;" he said, "but I desired him

¹⁷⁴ Lives, II, pp. 167-168.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., IV, pp. 21-22.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., II, p. 135.

to go away, which he willingly did."

As soon as I was alone, I kneeled down, and determined not to rise, but to continue crying and wrestling with God, till He had mercy on me. How long I was in that agony I cannot tell; but as I looked up to heaven, I saw the clouds open exceeding bright, and I saw Jesus hanging on the cross. At the same moment these words were applied to my heart, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." My chains fell off; my heart was free. All guilt was gone, and my soul was filled with unutterable peace. I loved God and all mankind, and the fear of death and hell was vanished away.¹⁷⁷

Matthew Arnold in his St. Paul And Protestantism¹⁷⁸ quotes this passage and says: "The conversion of Paul is in itself an incident of precisely the same order as the conversion of Sampson Staniforth, a Methodist soldier in the campaign of Fontenoy. Staniforth himself related his conversion. . . in words which bear plainly marked on them the very stamp of good faith. . . . Not the narrative, in the Acts, of Paul's journey to Damascus could more convince us. . . of its own honesty."¹⁷⁹

3. Moral Revolution

Another almost universal characteristic of these conversion experiences is the profound change that took place in the moral life of each man. The lives all refer to the moral revolution that followed the new birth. It was what Christopher Hopper called an evidence of God's power, a "miracle"--that drunkards should be made sober, that harlots should be made

¹⁷⁷ Lives, IV, p. 122.

¹⁷⁸ p. 54.

¹⁷⁹ Wesley's Veterans, I, p. 75n.

chaste, and thieves made honest. It was the kind of an experience that prompted a man like Thomas Olivers, the country's "bad boy," to mount his horse and ride far and wide repaying all of the many debts he had contracted during his youth. "This made a great noise," he says, "and confirmed the people in their opinion, that the change they saw in me was of God." ". . . I was always careful when people thanked me, to commend the grace of God; telling them, 'You ought to thank God; for if He had not converted me, I never should have thought of paying you.'"¹⁸⁰

The high ethical demands that accompanied the Methodist revival are well-known. More than an emotional experience was required; there had to be a moral change as well. The early Methodist preachers were among the leaders of that movement and witnessed in their own lives both a spiritual rebirth and a moral transformation. The strict code and process of examination that John Wesley adopted for himself and his preachers sometimes seems very rigid and unbending. In speaking of Methodist discipline once, John Hampson wrote, "The chief excellence of this system is its rigid attention to morality. . . no vice is allowed in this economy. No society, not even that of the Quakers, is so rigid in this respect; and in general, whenever a member is found to be immoral, he is

¹⁸⁰ Lives, II, pp. 68, 72.

instantly excluded."¹⁸¹ The standard of morality among the early lay preachers, the leaders of Methodism, was incomparably high.

4. Self-effacing, Self-condemning

They were self-effacing, self-condemning men. Very few of the early Methodist preachers thought of themselves more highly than they should have thought. During the period of conviction, their self-condemnation was extreme and violent. But even after their release from the bondage of guilt, they felt keenly their unworthiness to be called to the high task of proclaiming God's good news. John Murlin replied to Wesley's invitation for him to become a travelling preacher by saying, ". . . I might be of some use among my neighbors yet my abilities (are) not equal to so great a work."¹⁸² John Pawson wrote, "When Mr. Wesley asked me if I were willing to give up myself to the work, I trembled exceedingly. . . I replied, 'I am deeply sensible of my own weakness and insufficiency for so great a work. . . .'"¹⁸³ These are very typical attitudes.

5. Courage in Face of Persecution

No one in any day would question the courage and fortitude of Wesley's helpers. The persecution they suffered at the

¹⁸¹ John Hampson, op. cit., vol. III, pp. 89-90.

¹⁸² Lives, III, p. 297.

¹⁸³ Ibid., IV, p. 24.

hands of the mob is frightful to recall; but the courage with which they faced the mob's violence is evidence of their fortitude. The persecution of Nelson, Haime, and Hopper has already been observed in some detail. Their experiences were typical. Jonathon Maskew was stripped of his clothing and dragged naked through the streets "over the gravel and pavement" until he was unconscious.¹⁸⁴ Alexander Mather, after brutal treatment by the mob at Boston, said, "I was so bruised, almost from head to foot, that when I was cold, I could hardly stir. And it was a full year before I quite recovered the hurts which I then received."¹⁸⁵ Peter Jaco says, "At Warrington I was struck so violently with a brick on the breast, that the blood gushed out through my mouth, nose and ears."¹⁸⁶

Thomas Mitchell was probably the most severely treated of all the preachers. One Sunday at Wrangle during the early morning service, he was seized by two constables and carried to a public house where he was kept until four in the afternoon. All day the mob had been milling about outside. Word came from the local minister that he was not to be set free but handed over to the mob which ~~was done.~~ They threw him into a shallow pond again and again, painted him from head to foot, then carried him to a deeper pond; "Here," he says,

¹⁸⁴ Lives, I, p. 244.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., II, p. 174.

¹⁸⁶ Lives, I, p. 264.

. . . four men took me by my legs and arms, and swung me backward and forward. For a moment I felt the flesh shrink; but it was quickly gone. I gave myself up to the Lord, and was content His will should be done. They swung me two or three times, and then threw me as far as they could into the water. The fall and the water soon took away my senses, so that I felt nothing more. But some of them were not willing to have me drowned. So they watched till I came above water, and then, catching hold of my clothes with a long pole, made shift to drag me out.

I lay senseless for some time.¹⁸⁷

A friend carried him home and put him to bed. "But I had not lain long," he says, "before the mob came again, pulled me out of bed, carried me into the street, and swore they would take away one of my limbs, if I would not promise to come there no more. I told them, 'I can promise no such thing.'"¹⁸⁸ After more abuse his friends again rescued him, but again he was dragged from his bed and carried naked into the street. Upon the advice of the minister, he was carried out of the parish about a mile and set upon a hill with only a coat to cover his nakedness. As his tormentors abandoned him, they shouted three times, "God save the king, and the devil take the preacher!"¹⁸⁹

Here they left me (says Mitchell) penniless and friendless: for not one durst come near me. And my strength was nearly gone; so that I had much ado to walk, or even to stand. But, from the beginning to the end, my mind was in perfect peace. I found no anger or resentment, but could heartily pray for my persecutors. But I knew not what to do, or where to go.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ Lives, I, pp. 248-249.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 249.

¹⁸⁹ Loc. cit.

¹⁹⁰ Loc. cit.

Finally, by walking and crawling, he reached the house of a friend four miles away where he was tenderly received and allowed to recuperate for a few days. But soon he was out facing the mob again.

The bravery and courage evidenced by Mitchell in the face of such treatment was typical of most of the early preachers. Richard Rodda wrote to Wesley once, ". . . a rumor prevailed that there would be persecution, but I felt the love of Jesus warming my heart, and had not the least fear of either men or devils."¹⁹¹ These brave soldiers of Christ were so sure of their cause and so confident of God's presence that they faced the mob with the same fearless courage as the ancient Christians faced the lions in the Arena. Thomas Lee was invited to preach about a mile from Pateley. "When I came," he says, "the mob was gathered. However, in the name of the Lord I began. . . !" ¹⁹² Imprudent though he might have been in the eyes of some, in the eyes of all he was courageous.

6. Forgiving Love

These early preachers not only reacted to persecution with courage but with the forgiving love of Christ. Not many

¹⁹¹ Arminian Magazine, XIV, Oct., 1791, Letter #DLXXV, p. 555.

¹⁹² Lives, IV, p. 160.

of them professed pacifism, but almost all of them practiced^d non-violent resistance as the most practical and the most Christian response. They were not passive in non-resistance, but met violence and hate with peacefulness and love. Illustrations of this have already appeared in the life of Nelson and Hopper and in the other incidents of persecution related. Many more come to mind. Alexander Mather after the brutal treatment at Boston said, ". . . my first thought was, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'" ¹⁹³ John Valton after abusive treatment from a workman under his care, said, ". . . I did not report him, lest it should be prejudicial to his bread. It harassed me all the day; meanwhile, I prayed for him, and felt nothing contrary to love."¹⁹⁴

7. Hardships and Suffering Cheerfully Borne

The early itinerant preachers of Methodism faced, accepted, and bore pain and hardships willingly and cheerfully. The physical hardships and bodily discomforts endured by these men were myriad. At first they received no money for their services and were wholly dependent for food, clothing, and lodging upon the generosity of the people. As John Nelson and Wesley discovered in Cornwall, this was not always forthcoming.

¹⁹³ Lives, II, p. 174.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., VI, p. 42.

Peter Jaco writes:

I had many difficulties to struggle with. . . we had hardly the necessaries of life; so that after preaching three or four times a day, and riding thirty or forty miles, I have often been thankful for a little clean straw, with a canvas sheet to lie on.¹⁹⁵

The great difficulties that accompanied all travel in the eighteenth century has already been observed. These itinerant preachers, often unable to purchase a horse, found those difficulties extremely great at times. Alexander Mather, after being appointed as an itinerant in 1757, was sent to the Epworth Circuit. "I left London," he says, "to walk to Epworth, about a hundred and fifty miles."¹⁹⁶ John Pritchard in the Northampton Circuit about 1778 writes, "In the winter my horse fell ill; and I being poor, (for a Methodist preacher is likely so to be as long as he lives,) and the people poor also, I travelled the winter and spring quarters on foot, about twelve hundred miles."¹⁹⁷ A preacher's horse was a very important partner in those days. Thomas Olivers, after selling his horse, saddle, and bridle to pay his last debt before commencing his itinerant work, set out on foot. Too poor to buy another horse a friend offered the purchase price. Going into a field with a farmer, Olivers says:

¹⁹⁵ Lives, I, p. 264.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., II, p. 171.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., VI, p. 267.

In a few minutes a colt, about two years and a half old, came to me, and put his nose upon my shoulder: I stroked him, and asked the farmer, what he would take for him. He said, "Five pounds." We struck a bargain at once, and in a few days I mounted my horse, and have kept him to this day; which is about twenty-five years. On him I have travelled, comfortably, not less than a hundred thousand miles in preaching the Gospel.¹⁹⁸

The severity of the winters and the deplorable condition of the roads exposed the traveller to untold hardships.

William Ashman tells about being on the Salisbury Plain in a blinding snowstorm and losing the trail. Groping about for hours with night coming on, he stumbled at last upon a lonely farm house. Otherwise, he says, ". . . it is likely I should have died on the plain. . . as many did that winter."¹⁹⁹

Matthew Lumb on one of the very first circuits gives the following account of the life of a travelling preacher:

The circuit was very long, and we had very wet weather, so that I was wet to the skin almost every day for three weeks. This, with the dreary mountains over which I had to pass, served to bring my dear friends and comfortable home to my remembrance; so that I was much tried in my mind. . . . That winter was very hard, so that it was many times impossible to cross the mountains with a horse: therefore at three different times I walked in my boots and great coat, about one hundred and fifty miles, and yet did not catch cold.

Thrice I was very near being lost in the snow on the mountains. I crept over the drifts of snow upon my hands, whilst the snow fell so fast that I could not see many yards before me, and I was out of the road, and had no one to guide me.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Lives, II, p. 73.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., V, p. 310.

²⁰⁰ Arminian Magazine, XIV, 1791, pp. 555-556.

The good spirit and willingness with which these hardships were endured is illustrated by Thomas Taylor. In 1762 he says, ". . . though I had three hundred miles to ride, and a new work to begin, I had nothing allowed me either to take me thither, or support me when I got there. But of this I took no care; and, through a kind Providence, I wanted nothing."²⁰¹ After a long account of trials and troubles, he says, "But I cared very little about the matter, provided I could see some fruit of my labour. I could rest upon straw, when needful, and be well content."²⁰²

8. Self-sacrifice

The self-sacrifice of the itinerants need not be emphasized further. Their sincerity can seldom be questioned. They gave up their businesses, left homes and families for months at a time, and consented to serve without any money allowance wherever Wesley might direct. Thomas Olivers received a call from Wesley to become an assistant in Cornwall. "I was glad of the opportunity," he says; "as believing it to be the will of God concerning me. I therefore disposed of my effects, and paid the few debts I had again contracted. But I was not able to buy another horse; and therefore, with my boots on my legs, my great coat on my back, and my saddle-bags, with my

²⁰¹ Lives, V, p. 20.

²⁰² Ibid., p. 22.

books and linen, across my shoulder, I set out on foot,
October 24th, 1753."²⁰³

John Jane, like most of the early preachers, lived in habitual poverty. He was truly a martyr to the itinerancy for he died as a result of exposure. Wesley includes the account of Jane's death in his Journal which closes like this, "All his clothes, linen and woollen stockings, hat, and wig, are not thought sufficient to answer his funeral expenses, which amount to one pound seventeen shillings and threepence. All the money he had was one shilling and fourpence."²⁰⁴ Wesley's only comment was, "Enough for any unmarried preacher to leave to his executors."²⁰⁵ Southey when recording John Jane's death, rises to an unusual height of eulogy. He says, "St. Francis himself might have been satisfied with such a disciple."²⁰⁶

9. Personal Devotion to John Wesley

Another general characteristic of this body of laborers in God's vineyard was a warm, deep, personal devotion to John Wesley and a complete dedication to the work of bringing scriptural Christianity to the land. They all looked to Wesley as a "father in the gospel." The best of them took orders from

²⁰³ Lives, II, p. 73.

²⁰⁴ John Wesley, Journal, III, p. 494.

²⁰⁵ Loc. cit.

²⁰⁶ Robert Southey, op. cit., vol. II, p. 82.

him without demur and cheerfully accepted his directions and advice in all things. They always possessed the right to depart from him whenever they chose, and he retained the power to dismiss them at will. But Wesley's assistants were mostly loyal men, true to their leader, and devoted to their work. Thomas Walsh, who has sometimes been called Wesley's typical helper,²⁰⁷ wrote a letter in 1755 in which he declined going into the north because of his health. He said, "Dear Sir, you will not think I make light of your directions. No! God is my witness, that next to my immediate duty to Him, I desire to follow them as regularly as the shadow follows the substance."²⁰⁸ Again in writing to a young man who was contemplating the ministry, Walsh says, "May the Lord of the Harvest send forth more labourers; men after his own heart; full of wisdom, goodness, love and zeal. If I had more lives, or men, than one, I trust, ALL should be devoted to the service of Jesus Christ. To feed his lambs and sheep, is at present, the delight of my soul."²⁰⁹

10. Indefatigable Labors

John Wesley, the man they admired and loved, was a kind father but a severe taskmaster. He drove his preachers hard.

²⁰⁷ Richard Green, Thomas Walsh: Wesley's Typical Helper.

²⁰⁸ Arminian Magazine, II, 1779, p. 367.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., XVII, 1794, p. 444, dated London, Apr. 29, 1757.

He told them, "Be diligent, never be unemployed a moment. Never be triflingly employed. Never while away time; neither spend any more time in one place than is strictly necessary. You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore, spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those that want you, but to those that want you most."²¹⁰ Taking his words as their guide and his life as their example, they were indefatigable in their labors. They trudged on foot and on horseback thousands of miles preaching hundreds of sermons every year. Duncan Wright during his appointment in Scotland says:

. . . I commonly preached at Greenock in English, at seven in the morning; then spent two hours, from ten to twelve, with the Highlanders; walked to Port Glasgow, and preached in the streets at four; then walked back to Greenock, and preached at six o'clock, and then met the society. Although by this means I had many an aching head and pained breast, yet it was delightful to see hundreds attending to my blundering preaching. . . .²¹¹

Thomas Walsh, who literally wore himself out in service by the age of twenty-eight, averaged preaching twice a day and often spent fourteen hours a day in study. He was always either preaching, studying, or praying to God, but always at work. He was most careful with his time. "Will a man rob God?" he asked when begged to take more sleep. "I have but one life, and it is a hard case if I cannot live that for His sake, Who gave His life a ransom for mine."²¹²

²¹⁰ John Wesley, Works, VIII, pp. 309-310.

²¹¹ Lives, II, pp. 127-128. ²¹² Ibid., III, p. 145.

IV UNWORTHY ASSISTANTS

Unfortunately not all of Wesley's assistants can be classified under the preceeding general praiseworthy characterization. In the choice of helpers he was not always wise, although the proportion of moral and spiritual failures among them was very small indeed. Of the one hundred and ninety-three travelling preachers in the first generation during those very early years of experimentation, only seven²¹³ were expelled, or less than four percent. Of the four hundred and sixty in the second generation, fifteen were expelled, or three percent. It is worth noting that some few others who were suspected of failure left the connection of their own accord. Nevertheless, this list of twenty-two expulsions between 1740 and 1791 can be relied upon as being virtually complete because Wesley took every precaution to see that the public did not associate these thoroughly discredited men with the Methodist movement. Even if they depart^{ed} from him, he usually wrote out their dismissal and published it in the papers. Several times this practice spared him and the Methodists great embarrassment. There were also a few preachers who were suspended or expelled and then later reinstated, like Michael Fenwick.

²¹³ Myles gives eight. See page 159n.

1. James Wheatley

The earliest case of disciplinary action that resulted in final separation was taken by the Wesleys against James Wheatley. This unfortunate man had been a Methodist itinerant preacher since 1742. But Wesley says that he, ". . . never was clear, perhaps not sound, in the faith. According to his understanding was his preaching--an, unconnected rhapsody of unmeaning words, like Sir John Sucklings'

Verses, smooth and soft as cream,
In which was neither depth nor stream.

Yet (to the utter reproach of the Methodist congregations) this man became a most popular preacher."²¹⁴

In 1751 serious charges were made to Charles Wesley against the character and practice of Wheatley. Without going into the details of the matter, Wheatley, who regarded himself as an authority on women's cases, had been guilty of gross improprieties in examining and prescribing for them. After a thorough investigation had been made, the charges were found to be unquestionably true and more widespread than originally imagined. At first the accused man stubbornly denied everything, but confronted by John and Charles Wesley and by some of the women involved, Wheatley admitted his guilt and professed repentance. It soon became clear, however, that he

²¹⁴ John Wesley, Letters, III, pp. 82-83, London, Dec. 20, 1751.

was not truly repentant. Wesley says:

. . . I saw strong proof that he was not: (1) Because he never owned one tittle but what he knew we could prove; (2) because he always extenuated what he could not deny; (3) because he as constantly accused others as excused himself, saying many had been guilty of little imprudences as well as he; (4) because in doing this he told several palpable untruths, which he well knew so to be.²¹⁵

Therefore, on June 25th the following document was read in his presence and handed to him with the expressed desire that this would only amount to a one year suspension:

June 25, 1751.

Because you have wrought folly in Israel, grieved the Holy Spirit of God, betrayed your own soul into temptation and sin, and the souls of many others, whom you ought, even at the peril of your own life, to have guarded against all sin; because you have given occasion to the enemies of God, whenever they shall know these things, to blaspheme the ways and truth of God:

We can in no wise receive you as a fellow labourer till we see clear proofs of your real and deep repentance. Of this you have given us no proof yet. You have not so much as named one single person in all England or Ireland with whom you have behaved ill, except those we knew before.

The least and lowest proof of such repentance which we can receive is this: that till our next Conference (which we hope will be in October), you abstain both from preaching and from practising physic. If you do not we are clear; we cannot answer for the consequences.

John Wesley
Charles Wesley²¹⁶

Wheatley proved incorrigible. For some weeks he evinced his lack of repentance by going from house to house justifying himself and condemning the Wesleys for the action they had taken against him. He then went to Norwich where he

²¹⁵ John Wesley, Journal, III, p. 532.

²¹⁶ Loc. cit.

was unknown and began to preach again, thus completing his separation from the Methodists. In Norwich he had great success against terrific persecution. Displaying real courage, he gathered together an enthusiastic congregation that erected for him the largest tabernacle in the city. It appeared as though he had recovered himself and that a life of usefulness lay before him. But once more in 1754 the old weakness led him astray. Rumors and stories of his outrages spread wildly through the city. He was brought to trial, convicted, and forced to do public penance. Tyerman says that he left the kingdom for a time but later returned to Norwich and preached for a number of years.²¹⁷

2. Thomas Williams

A somewhat different case was that of Thomas Williams who has already been mentioned briefly in Chapter II. As was then observed, he began travelling with Wesley in 1741. He was well educated, attractive, and most acceptable as a preacher. But Williams had several fatal defects of character. He was uncommonly ambitious, impatient of control, unstable in his religious views, and "lacking in high moral principle."²¹⁸ Against the specific orders of the Wesleys, Williams had been

²¹⁷ Luke Tyerman, op. cit., II, p. 126.

²¹⁸ John Simon, The Advance of Methodism, p. 44.

guilty of preaching caustic sermons against the clergy. This had wrought severe havoc in many places and especially at Wednesbury where the revengeful clergy stirred up such deplorable riots.

On May 2, 1744, Williams announced to Charles Wesley that he had applied to the Archbishop for orders. Wesley reproved him for his hastiness and he "flew out of the house, as possessed by Legion."²¹⁹ According to one who knew him well, Williams was "a haughty, revengeful, headlong, and unmanageable man," and he soon proved that this estimate of his character was correct.²²¹ Going from one society to another, he began a series of personal attacks upon the Wesleys, scattering malicious stories, and vowing vengeance. The result was a serious disturbance in the Foundery Society and even beyond. Finally, after every effort to bring about a reconciliation, John Wesley says, ". . . I was constrained to declare to the society that Thomas Williams was no longer in connexion with us."²²⁰ The expulsion of Williams was maintained for some time; but later when he came to Wesley humble and repentant, the warm-hearted leader of the Methodists relented and reinstated him as a lay preacher.

Williams rendered a significant service to early Methodism by being the first to carry the standard into Ireland.

²¹⁹ Charles Wesley, Journal, I, p. 365.

²²⁰ John Wesley, Journal, III, p. 144.

²²¹ John Simon, The Advance of Methodism, p. 200.

In 1755, however, he was separated from Wesley again. The details of this estrangement are hidden. Atmore says that he ". . . fell from his stedfastness; and his life and conversation not being according to the Gospel, he was excluded from the Methodist Connection."²²² He later obtained episcopal ordination and served with considerable popularity for some years at High Wycombe.²²³ According to Tyerman he fell into outward sin, married, and deserted both wife and work²²⁴ and died in May 1787.²²⁵

Though details are scarce in most of the other twenty cases, the majority of the expulsions were for one of the two failures--immorality or insubordination--illustrated by Wheatley and Williams, respectively. After almost any indiscretion, Wesley was more than willing to forgive a true penitent if convinced of his sincerity; but he would never countenance immorality in any form. On the other hand, he would tolerate insubordination and disobedience for months when it was over a sincerely held difference of belief; but when the work began to suffer because of a man's disobedience, stubbornness, or unholy ambition, Wesley was quick to exclude him from the fellowship.

²²² Charles Atmore, op. cit., p. 507.

²²³ Loc. cit.

²²⁴ Luke Tyerman, op. cit., II, p. 536.

²²⁵ John Wesley, Journal, III, 144n.

It is not pleasant to mention these ugly smudges that appear on the canvas; but they are part of the picture. They are some of the imperfections that must be pointed out in order to estimate the true value of the Methodist institution of lay preaching. Wesley's determination, in so far as possible, to keep the movement free of those unworthy of their high calling, was tremendously important in acting as a restraint upon those who tended toward weakness and in making the early assistants powerful and holy instruments for the spread of Methodism.

Thus the general characterization of Wesley's assistants is completed. It is clear that they were, with few exceptions, plain unpretending men of their age who had only a simple unpolished faith but a deep personal experience of God through Jesus Christ their Saviour. They were men possessed--possessed by a passionate love for God and man--and ruled by a high ethical code. But in spite of their zeal and absolute confidence in their calling, they were humble, self-effacing, self-sacrificing men who felt themselves unworthy for such sacred work. They were generous and forgiving almost to an extreme and endured privations and hardships with a composure and cheerfulness that elicits the highest admiration. Yet, their humility and resignation did not mean they were timid. Rather, they were as bold and courageous as the bravest in England's long and noble tradition. They embraced danger and

persecution with the ardor of the early martyrs. Their sufferings welded them into a closer fellowship and strengthened their devotion to John Wesley and to their common task of reviving true religion in the land.

CHAPTER IV

THE WORK AND PLACE OF THE LAY PREACHERS IN THE METHODIST SOCIETIES

The rise and establishment of lay preaching in early Methodism and the life and character of the first assistants of John Wesley have been examined in some detail; it is now appropriate to examine the work they did and the position they held in the Methodist Societies.

Part I -- The Work Of The Lay Preachers In The Methodist Societies

The work of the lay preachers has already been partially described in what has gone before; but the immediate section is designed to deal more in detail with the formal rules, regulations, and duties that grew up around these assistants and that formed the major part of the first Methodist discipline.

I EARLY DEVELOPMENTS

1. The Conference

The instrument through which these rules and duties were promulgated and established with the authority of law was the Conference. First, then, a word about Conference:

The first Conference met at the Foundery, June 25-30, 1744. Writing much later about the event, Wesley said, "In 1744 I wrote to several clergymen, and to all who then served me as sons in the gospel, desiring them to meet me in London, and to give me their advice concerning the best method of carrying on the work of God."¹ Present at that Conference besides the Wesleys were four clergymen of the Church of England, John Hodges, Henry Piers, Samuel Taylor, and John Meriton, and four lay preachers, Thomas Richards, Thomas Maxfield, John Bennet, and John Downes. The custom was soon established that Conference ^{would}~~met~~ once a year for a period of about five or six days.²

Conference was a period of free, open discussion and self-expression. As Wesley once said, "I love to do all things openly."³ He always felt that several minds were safer than one, and not only welcomed advice, but sincerely sought the counsel of his coadjutors through the deliberations of Conference. Yet, when that has been said, it is clear that the actions of Conference were primarily the work of Wesley both in content and diction. After a study of Wesley's agenda for the 1744 Conference which was prepared several weeks prior to

¹ John Wesley, Works, VIII, p. 312.

² Later as the temporal affairs of Methodism increased the time was extended. See John Wesley, Journal, VI, p. 290, 1780.

³ John Wesley, Works, VIII, p. 310.

the meeting³ and after a close comparison of it with Bennet's Minutes, this fact becomes even clearer for the outlines are almost identical. Wesley made his original intentions about the nature of Conference very clear when he observed, "I myself sent for these (who conferred with him in Conference) of my own free choice. And I sent for them to advise, not govern me."⁴ Throughout his lifetime, Conference remained largely that--an advisory assembly.

In 1784 by a "Deed of Declaration," Wesley constituted the Conference a legal corporation of one hundred preachers, invested it with powers which none could dispute at law after his death, and at the same time carefully safeguarded his own prerogatives for the remainder of his life. In those forty years between 1744 and 1784, the annual Conference had grown to be a very important institution in the affairs of Methodism. Though it was still the impersonal, corporate dress for Wesley's decisions, the preachers took an increasing part in its deliberations. It was an event keenly anticipated from year to year. The annual trek to the Conference town became almost a holy pilgrimage for Conference was a time of temporary withdrawal from the world of temptations and disappointments, a time of refreshing fellowship, mutual encouragement, and spiritual

³ Richard Viney's Diary, Proceedings, XIV, pp. 201-203, contains the only extant copy of this agenda.

⁴ John Wesley, Works, VIII, p. 312.

enrichment for all the preachers. It was usually an opportunity for Wesley to preach to his band of helpers. When he spoke, they found their hope renewed and their confidence in God and in themselves strengthened. With a song in their hearts and praise on their lips, they went down from the Conference town into the byways of Britain to face hardships and persecution with zest and joy. Conference was truly the preachers' meeting. "It will occasion no surprise," says Doughty,⁵ that the Conference soon came to concern itself very largely with the Preachers: their choice, training, work, discipline, physical well-being, and even, on occasion, their domestic affairs.⁵ But Wesley, likewise, derived great personal benefit from these gatherings of his preachers. In 1766 he wrote, "A happier Conference we never had, nor a more profitable one. It was both begun and ended in love, and with a solemn sense of the presence of God."⁶ Many are the Journal references to the "happy" and "profitable" times they all experienced together in Conference.

The proceedings of this body were carefully recorded and became known as the Minutes of Conference. Since the discussions were at first secret, the minutes were not immediately published, and many of the early records were consequently

⁵ W. L. Doughty, John Wesley, His Conference and His Preachers, p. 29.

⁶ John Wesley, Journal, V, p. 182.

lost.⁷ Soon, however, Wesley saw the advisability of publishing at least some of the Minutes. The first appeared in Dublin in 1749 in two small pamphlets. In 1753 he chose all of the important doctrinal and disciplinary decisions of the preceding conferences ~~conference~~ and published what became known as the Large Minutes. This underwent five revisions during his lifetime, and the sixth edition appeared in 1789. The changes in each edition are remarkably few. The 1862 edition of the Minutes of Conference, volume I, has each of these six forms of the Large Minutes appearing in parallel columns which is extremely helpful for a comparison of changes and revisions that occurred in the successive editions. It is remarkable that the formulation of doctrine and rules should have changed so little in forty-five years.

It is interesting to observe that in the first few Conferences the major part of the time was occupied with the discussion of theological issues, but after 1747 only a few references to doctrine are made. Once the doctrinal basis of Methodism was clearly defined, it changed in very few particulars. As the discussions about doctrine decreased, however, the discussions about the preachers and their work increased. As

⁷ A few copies of MS minutes have been preserved. The best known are the Headingly Minutes, supposedly Wesley's own copy, and the Bennet Minutes. These two have been collated and published by the Wesley Historical Society in 1896 under the title of Bennet's Minutes (WHS Publications #1). There are one or two others of occasional Conferences like the Jacob Rowell Minutes of the 1753 Conference and appear in the 1862 edition of Minutes, pp. 717-720. For further details about minutes, see WHS Publications, #1, pp. 3-6.

Methodism grew the temporal affairs of Conference grew, and soon its principal business was governing and administering Methodist matters.

According to Wesley's agenda, the order of business in the first Conference was, "1. What to teach; 2. How to teach; and 3. What to do? i.e., Doctrine, Discipline, and Practice."⁸ It was not until the fifth ~~the fifth~~ day that the questions of discipline regarding the preachers arose. The first question asked on June 29th was, "Are Lay assistants allowable?" As observed in a former chapter, the answer was a hesitant yes, "only in cases of necessity." Nevertheless, after agreeing to the fact that they were "allowable," the next step was to define and delimit their functions, and to set up certain rules and regulations governing their selection, admission, training, and control.

2. Selection and Admission

In the beginning the assistants were chosen and commissioned by Wesley in a very informal way. They were admitted as "sons in the gospel" and given permission to represent themselves as Methodist preachers by verbal agreement. At first, they probably approached Wesley themselves on the matter of assisting him; but as the work grew and laborers did not

⁸ Proceedings, XIV, p. 201.

increase in proportion, Wesley was forced to put the challenge of being a Methodist preacher directly up to some he thought had the necessary faith and talents. For instance, Matthew Lowes had for some time struggled against the call to full time service and in his autobiography quotes a sentence of a letter from Wesley which arrived at a crucial time. "Brother Lowes," said Wesley, "You have a dispensation from God to preach the Gospel, and woe unto you, if you preach not the gospel."⁹ He was unable to withstand the power of Wesley's personal appeal and agreed to travel.

In later years as the number of preachers reached into the hundreds, it was the assistants who worked with the local preachers in the circuits; it was they who learned to know the ones who were qualified for the work of a travelling preacher, and Wesley depended more and more upon their judgment and recommendations. Sometimes, as in the case of Thomas Hanson, when the shortage of helpers became very acute, Wesley appointed one as a travelling preacher upon the recommendation of an assistant without that one's knowledge or consent.

Hanson says:

Not long after this, a letter came from Mr. Thomas Olivers, (who afterwards behaved with the tenderness and wisdom of a father to me,) to let me know that I was appointed by the Conference to travel in the then York Circuit. This was done wholly without my knowledge. No one

⁹ Arminian Magazine, XVIII, Nov., 1795, p. 527.

had spoken to me about it, nor I to anyone.¹⁰

The prerequisites for a Methodist preacher were very early formed in Wesley's mind and established by Conference in 1746. It was asked:

Q. 8. How shall we try those who believe they are moved by the Holy Ghost and called of God to preach?

A. Enquire 1. Do they know in whom they have believed? Have they the love of God in their hearts? Do they desire and seek nothing but God? And are they holy in all manner of conversation? 2. Have they Gifts (as well as Grace) for the work? Have they (in some tolerable degree) a clear sound understanding? Have they a right judgment in the things of God? Have they a just conception of the salvation by faith? And has God given them any degree of utterance? Do they speak justly, readily, clearly? 3. Have they success? Do they not only speak as generally either to convince or affect the hearts? But have any received remission of sins by their preaching? a clear and lasting sense of the love of God? As long as these marks undeniably concur in any, we allow him to be called of God to preach. These we receive as sufficient reasonable evidence that he is moved thereto by the Holy Ghost.

Q. 9. But how shall we know, in the case of a particular person, whether there is this evidence or no?

A. 1. We will send one of our Helpers to hear him preach, and to talk with him on the preceding heads. 2. We will hear him preach, and talk with him ourselves. 3. We will examine thoroughly those who think they have received remission of sins by his preaching. 4. We will desire him to relate or to write down the reason why he believes he is called of God to preach. 5. We will desire the congregation to join with us in fasting and prayer, that we may judge and act according to the will of God.¹¹

These requirements changed in phraseology only very slightly during Wesley's lifetime.

At first men were received directly into the travelling

¹⁰ Lives, VI, pp. 206-207.

¹¹ Bennet's Minutes, p. 35.

relationship; but soon Wesley found it was a wise plan to place a man on probation or "trial" for a year before admitting him into "full connexion." Then the man who had been "received on trial" attended the following Conference; there after examination, fasting, and prayer, he was "received into full connexion." At Conference in 1784 the question was asked, "Is not the time of trial for preachers too short?" "It is," came the reply, "for the time to come, let them be on trial four years."¹²

Although these were the rules in the matter, it is interesting to observe that Wesley never felt absolutely bound even by his own regulations and was not averse to countermanding them if he felt the circumstances justified. One irregular case was that of Robert Carr Brackenbury whose name appears in the list of appointments for the year, 1784, but was never admitted on trial or into full connection. In that same year he was sent to Jersey and spent most of his period of service in the Channel Islands. Matthew Lelièvre in his Histoire Du Methodisme Dans Les Iles De La Manche has given one of the most complete accounts of Brackenbury's peculiar relationship to Conference. He says:

Son nom figura sur les Minutes de la Conférence à partir de 1784, en qualité de prédicateur pleinement reçu, sans

¹² Minutes, I, p. 173. (The 1812 edition of the Minutes of Conference will be referred to simply as Minutes. The 1862 edition of Minutes of Conference will be referred to as Minutes, 1862.)

qu'il eût eu à faire le noviciat d'usage. Sa situation, quoi qu'il eût désormais sa place dans les conférences, fut toujours un peu différente de celle des assistants ordinaires de Wesley. Non seulement il ne recevait aucun salaire, mais il subvint longtemps, à peu près seul, aux besoins des oeuvres auxquelles il se consacra. Il n'eut à se saumettre ni au règlement qui obligeait les prédicateurs à changer fréquemment de poste, ni à l'obligation d'un séjour ininterrompue dans le circuit dont il était le principal prédicateur. Il prolongea, en effet, pendant près de sept années, son séjour dans îles de la Manche, mais en se réservant d'aller passer, de temps en temps, quelques mois, soit dans ses propriétés, soit dans quelque retraite reculée, pour s'y livrer, sans distraction, à la méditation et à la prière. Il sortait de ces retraites retrempé pour le travail et reprenait avec une nouvelle ardeur la tâche que Dieu lui assignait.¹³

In the beginning Wesley questioned the applicants informally about their beliefs and willingness to conform to Methodist doctrine and discipline. In 1746 it was asked at Conference, "Why do we not use more form and solemnity in receiving a new labourer?" "We purposely decline it:" came the reply, "1. Because there is something of stateliness in it, whereas we would be little and insignificant; 2. Because we would not make haste. We desire barely to follow Providence, as it gradually opens."¹⁴ But the matter could not be left thus dangling. In the 1749 Conference it was asked "What method should we take in receiving a new Helper?" The time had come when a clear policy was necessary. The following method was adopted:

¹³ Matthew Lelièvre, Histoire Du Méthodisme Dans Les Îles De La Manche, pp. 180-181.

¹⁴ Bennet's Minutes, p. 35.

1. Let him be recommended to us by the Assistant to whose Society he belongs.

2. Let him read and carefully weigh the Conferences, and see whether he can agree to them or no.

3. Let him be received as a Probationer, by having a book given him inscribed thus: 'You think that it is your duty to call sinners to repentance. Make full proof that God has called you hereto, and we shall be glad to act in concert with you.'

4. Let him come to the next Conference, and after examination, fasting, and prayer, be received as a Helper, by having a book given him inscribed thus: 'So long as you freely consent and earnestly endeavour to walk according to the following rules we shall rejoice to go on with you hand in hand. We are, yours affectionately,--.'

5. Let a new book be given at every Conference, and the former returned.¹⁵

The form of questions and procedure underwent considerable changes in 1766 but after that they seem to have changed very little. Their final form in 1789 appeared as follows:

Q. 51. What method may we use in receiving a new Helper?

A. A proper time for doing this is at a Conference after solemn fasting and prayer.

Every person proposed is then to be present; and each of them may be asked,--Have you faith in Christ? Are you "going on to perfection?" Do you expect to be "perfected in love" in this life? Are you groaning after it? Are you resolved to devote yourself wholly to God and to his work? Do you know the Methodist plan? Have you read the "Plain Account?" the "Appeals?" Do you know the Rules of the Society? of the Bands? Do you keep them? Do you take no snuff, tobacco, drams? Do you constantly attend the church and sacrament? Have you read the "Minutes of the Conference?" Are you willing to conform to them? Have you considered the Rules of a Helper; especially the First, Tenth, and Twelfth? Will you keep them for conscience's sake? Are you determined to employ all your time in the work of God? Will you preach every morning and evening;

¹⁵ Minutes, 1862, I, p. 710. The distinction between "Helpers" and "Assistants" will be pointed out in the next section. It should be said here, however, that although their duties varied the manner of selection and admission was the same. An Assistant after 1749 was always a Helper first.

endeavouring not to speak too long, or too loud? Will you recommend fasting, both by precept and example? Are you in debt? Are you engaged to marry?

(N.B. A Preacher who marries while on trial, is thereby set aside.)

We may then receive him as a probationer, by giving him the "Minutes of the Conference," inscribed thus:--

"To A. B.

"Your think it your duty to call sinners to repentance. Make full proof hereof, and we shall rejoice to receive you as a fellow-labourer."

Let him then read and carefully weigh what is contained therein, that if he has any doubt it may be removed.

Observe: Taking on trial is entirely different from admitting a Preacher. One on trial may be either admitted or rejected, without doing him any wrong; otherwise it would be no trial at all. Let every Assistant explain this to them that are on trial.

When he has been on trial four years, if recommended by the Assistant, he may be received into full connexion, by giving him the "Minutes," inscribed thus: "As long as you freely consent to, and earnestly endeavour to walk by, these Rules, we shall rejoice to acknowledge you as a fellow-labourer."¹⁶

It was by no means easy to become a Methodist preacher.

3. The Office Of An Assistant

After establishing the fact that lay preachers were permissible, the next question that arose in the first Conference was, "What is the office of an Assistant?"¹⁷ The answer was:

In the absence of the Minister to feed and guide, to teach and govern the flock. 1. To expound every morning and evening. 2. To meet the United Societies, the Bands, the Select Societies, and the Penitents every week. 3. To visit the classes (London and Bristol excepted) once a month. 4. To hear and decide all differences. 5. To put

¹⁶ John Wesley, Works, VIII, pp. 325-326.

¹⁷ Bennet's Minutes, p. 15.

the disorderly back on trial, and to receive on trial for the Bands or Society. 6. To see that the Stewards and the Leaders, Schoolmasters and Housekeepers faithfully discharge their several offices. 7. To meet the Stewards, the Leaders ¹⁸ of the Bands and Classes weekly, and overlook their accounts.

It is clear that Wesley had in mind all of the travelling preachers who were then helping him in the work. At that time the terms Assistant and Helper (as indicated in the Foreword) were used interchangeably. All of the itinerants acted as direct assistants to Wesley, exercising his authority and power in his absence. But as the work grew and as the number of preachers correspondingly increased, Wesley came more and more to depend upon one of the several helpers in each circuit to act as a kind of superintendent who was directly responsible to him for all of the preachers and societies in that circuit. These superintendent preachers were designated "Assistants," while the other itinerants were called "Helpers." The first clear distinction seems to have been recognized in the Conference of 1749. According to Wesley's own Minutes for that year, an effort was being made to affect a closer union among the Methodist Societies:

Q. 2. How may we make some advances towards this (closer union)?

A. By appointing one of our Helpers in each Circuit to take charge of the Societies therein.

Q. 3. By what means may such a Helper be distinguished from the rest?

A. He may be termed an Assistant.

Q. 4. How should an Assistant be qualified for the charge?

A. Not so much by superior gifts, as by walking closely with God.¹⁹

Both Assistants and Helpers, however, were still itinerant preachers;

¹⁸ Bennet's Minutes, p. 15.

¹⁹ Minutes, 1862, I, pp. 708-709.

they still held an equal position in Conference; and they were governed and controlled by the same rules and regulations. The Assistant was simply a Helper who was given an enlarged sphere of work and some added responsibilities. Wesley endeavoured to make as few discriminations among his preachers as possible. It is plain from the list of Assistants in the Minutes that they changed from year to year; but, naturally, his most capable Helpers were usually appointed to that position.

The whole distinction, however, is more apparent than real. It was actually an administrative distinction. The Helpers had almost the same duties in their sphere of labor as the Assistants had in a larger sphere. It will not be necessary in every case to separate the specific duties of a Helper from those of an Assistant because where the duty of an Assistant differed from that of a Helper is made quite clear by its supervisory nature. Their labors were so similar that it is justifiable to speak about "the work of the lay preachers" and include all of the itinerants. This examination of the office of an Assistant, then, necessarily includes the duties of a Helper.

Following the separation of Assistants and Helpers at the 1749 Conference, the question was asked, "What is the business of an Assistant?"

A. 1. To see that the other Preachers in the Circuit behave well, and want nothing. 2. To visit the Classes quarterly in each place, regulate the bands, and deliver new tickets. 3. To keep watch-nights and love-feasts. 4. To take in, or put out of the Bands, or Society. 5. To hold Quarterly Meetings, and therein diligently to inquire both into the spiritual and temporal state of each Society. 6. To take care that every Society be duly supplied with books, and that the money for them be constantly returned. 7. To send from every Quarterly Meeting a circumstantial account to London, (1) of every

remarkable conversion, (2) of every one who dies in the triumph of faith. 8. To take exact lists of his Societies every Easter, and bring them to the next Conference. 9. To meet the married men, the married Women, the single men, and single women in the large Societies, once a quarter. 10. To see that every Society have a private room, and a set of the Library for the Helper. And, 11. To travel with me, if required, once a year, through the Societies in his Circuit.²¹

Several new duties which had been added during the five years between 1744 and 1749 are clearly seen from a comparison with the first version on page 260. The office of an Assistant underwent only a few minor alterations in the next forty years. The actual changes in content are so slight in the 1789 edition of the Large Minutes it is unnecessary to quote the final form that they assumed during Wesley's lifetime.²² The labors required of Wesley's early travelling preachers were exacting and, if fully carried out, exhausting.

4. Rules and Discipline

Spread as they were throughout England and before long throughout Ireland and Scotland as well, it is a remarkable fact that the early Methodist preachers remained as loyal and well organized a body as they did. It would almost be expected that there would have been constant schism; and at the

²¹ Minutes, 1862, I, p. 44. These correspond in content to Wesley's Minutes for the same year but are probably a later arrangement.

²² John Wesley, Works, VIII, see pp. 319-321.

very beginning that was the case. But as the movement gained momentum and as Wesley began to perfect the organization and discipline, he was able to regulate and control the preachers with amazing dexterity.

If one word could characterize every phase of John Wesley's life it would be "discipline." Mental, physical, and spiritual discipline were to him three aspects of the single way to perfect health and happiness. In 1770 after many years of experience, he wrote to Christopher Hopper, "If a man preach like an angel, he will do little good without exact discipline."²³ John Wesley not only practised extreme discipline within his own life but was so convinced of the wisdom of the practice that he imposed it upon his lay preachers in an elaborate set of rules and regulations that reached into the smallest details of their lives. Not a moment of the day, not an item of their labors was left untouched or uncontrolled. To understand the work they did, it is essential to understand the rules and discipline that so closely governed them in all their activities.

(a) "The Twelve Rules Of A Helper"

Immediately following the discussion about the office of an Assistant at the first Conference in 1744, the question

²³ John Wesley, Letters, V, p. 204.

was asked, "What are the Rules of an Assistant?"²⁴ The first edition of what soon became known as "The Twelve Rules of a Helper" was then set forth. George Latham in the Proceedings²⁵ has traced the changes in the Rules as they occurred in the six subsequent editions of the Large Minutes published during Wesley's lifetime and also in the final 1797 edition. Though the work of Latham need not be done again, one or two additional observations are necessary. The Minutes for 1744 that appear in the 1812 edition and the 1862 edition of the Minutes of Conference and in Bennet's Minutes do not agree as to the exact wording. Since Bennet's Minutes are correlated with the Headingly Minutes and corrected in Wesley's own handwriting, they are accepted here as nearest his own first intention. Therefore, in answer to the question, "What are the Rules of an Assistant?" the following are listed by Bennet in 1744:

1. Be diligent, never be unemployed a moment, never be triflingly employed, (never while away time,) spend no more time at any place than is strictly necessary.
2. Be serious. Let your motto be, Holiness unto the Lord. Avoid all lightness as you would avoid hell-fire, and laughing as you would cursing and swearing.
3. Touch no woman; be as loving as you will, but hold your hands off'em. Custom is nothing to us.
4. Believe evil of no one. If you see it done, well; else take heed how you credit it. Put the best construction on every thing. You know the judge is always allowed (supposed) to be on the prisoner's side.

²⁴ Bennet's Minutes, p. 15.

²⁵ Proceedings, VII, 1910, pp. 82-84.

5. Speak evil of no one; else your word especially would eat as doth a canker. Keep your thoughts within your (own) breast, till you come to the person concerned.

6. Tell everyone what you think wrong in him, and that plainly, and as soon as may be, else it will fester in your heart. Make all haste, therefore, to cast the fire out of your bosom.

7. Do nothing as a gentleman: you have no more to do with this character than with that of a dancing-master. You are the servant of all, therefore

8. Be ashamed of nothing but sin: not of fetching wood, or drawing water, if time permit; not of cleaning your own shoes or your neighbour's.

9. Take no money of any one. If they give you food when you are hungry, or clothes when you need them, it is good. But not silver or gold. Let there be no pretence to say, we grow rich by the Gospel.

10. Contract no debt without my knowledge.

11. Be punctual: do everything exactly at the time; and in general do not mend our rules, but keep them, not for wrath but for conscience sake.

12. Act in all things not according to your own will, but as a son in the Gospel. As such, it is your part to employ your time in the manner which we direct: partly in visiting the flock from house to house (the sick in particular); partly, in such a course of Reading, Meditation and Prayer, as we advise from time to time. Above all, if you labour with us in our Lord's vineyard, it is needful you should do that part of the work (which) we prescribe (direct) at those times and places which we judge most for His glory.²⁶

At Conference in 1745 it was asked, "Should any other rule be added to the twelve?"²⁷ That which became number eleven was then given in answer, "Only this:--You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those who want you, but to those who want you most."²⁸

²⁶ Bennet's Minutes, pp. 15-16. The words in () are corrections in Wesley's own handwriting.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 27.

²⁸ Loc. cit.

The stringency of these rules is obvious at a glance. It is a little encouraging to note that in the next complete edition of "The Twelve Rules of a Helper" as they appeared in the Large Minutes printed in 1753, rules numbered nine and ten were omitted. In the same edition a new rule appears numbered four. It says, "Take no step toward marriage, without first acquainting us with your design as soon as you conveniently can." According to the 1812 edition of the Minutes for 1744, this rule appeared in the very first edition. Also according to the Disciplinary Minutes published in 1749, this rule appeared.²⁹ When it was first laid down, therefore, is not absolutely certain; but it was evidently soon added to the list of those reported by Bennet in 1744.

After these few major changes were made in the early years, the rules have remained unaltered except in minor phraseology to the present day. Without noting all of these small additions and deletions that occurred in the six subsequent editions, the following is the form in which "The Twelve Rules of a Helper" appeared in 1789 after forty-five years of application:

1. Be diligent. Never be unemployed a moment. Never be triflingly employed. Never while away time; neither spend any more time at any place than is strictly necessary.
2. Be serious. Let your motto be, "Holiness to the Lord." Avoid all lightness, jesting, and foolish talking.

²⁹ Minutes, 1862, I, p. 24.

3. Converse sparingly and cautiously with women; particularly with young women.

4. Take no step toward marriage, without first consulting with your brethren.

5. Believe evil of no one; unless you see it done, take heed how you credit it. Put the best construction on everything. You know the Judge is always supposed to be on the prisoner's side.

6. Speak evil of no one; else your word especially would eat as doth a canker. Keep your thoughts within your own breast, till you come to the person concerned.

7. Tell every one what you think wrong in him, and that plainly, as soon as may be; else it will fester in your heart. Make all haste to cast the fire out of your bosom.

8. Do not affect the gentleman. You have no more to do with this character than with that of a dancing-master. A Preacher of the gospel is the servant of all.

9. Be ashamed of nothing but sin: Not of fetching wood (if time permit) or drawing water; not of cleaning your own shoes, or your neighbour's.

10. Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time. And in general, do not mend our Rules, but keep them; not for wrath, but for conscience' sake.

11. You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those that want you, but to those that want you most.

Observe: It is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care of this or that society; but save as many souls as you can; to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance, and with all your power to build them up in that holiness without which they cannot see the Lord. And remember! A Methodist Preacher is to mind every point, great and small, in the Methodist Discipline! Therefore you will need all the sense you have, and to have all your wits about you!

12. Act in all things, not according to your own will, but as a son in the Gospel. As such, it is your part to employ your time in the manner which we direct; partly, in preaching and visiting from house to house; partly, in reading, meditation, and prayer. Above all, if you labour with us in our Lord's vineyard, it is needful that you should do that part of the work which we advise at those times and places which we judge most for his glory.³⁰

³⁰ John Wesley, Works, VIII, pp. 309-310.

It is readily seen that these rules were given to guide the preachers in matters which concerned their work, their private conduct, and their relations to each other, to the members of the societies, and to the Wesleys. These twelve rules became the core of all Methodist discipline.

(b) Imposed Discipline

These were the rules that every Helper and Assistant had to accept when becoming a Methodist preacher. The amazing thing is that Wesley did not stop here but went even further in his ordering and disciplining of every aspect of the life of his preachers. Wesley planned and organized his own time to the last degree, and the Large Minutes are principally his attempt to do the same for the lives of his preachers. A few sections will suffice to illustrate.

At the very first Conference Wesley asked, "Should all our Assistants keep journals? A. By all means, as well for our satisfaction as for the profit of their own souls."³¹ In 1746 he went even further and recommended that they keep "a journal of every hour."³² At the same Conference he answered the question about how to be more useful in conversation by saying, "1. Plan every conversation before you begin. 2. Watch and pray during the time, that your mind be not dissipated.

³¹ Bennet's Minutes, p. 16.

³² Ibid., p. 36.

3. Spend 2 or 3 minutes every hour in solemn prayer. 4. Strictly observe the morning and evening hour of retirement."³³ As early as 1745 Wesley was advising the assistants about the best general method of employing their time.³⁴ He later expanded these suggestions a little and said:

We advise you, (1) As often as possible to rise at four. (2) From four to five in the morning, and from five to six in the evening, to meditate, pray, and read, partly the Scripture with the Notes, partly the closely practical parts of what we have published. (3) From six in the morning till twelve, (allowing an hour for breakfast,) to read in order with much prayer, first, "The Christian Library," and the other books which we have published in prose and verse, and then those which we recommended in our Rules of Kingswood School.³⁵

Extreme discipline was the watchword of the Methodists.

(c) Reading and Study

John Wesley was a scholar of no mean ability and possessed high scholastic ideals for himself and for his preachers. The first Conference in 1744 seriously faced the possibility of establishing a seminary for the training of the assistants. Though it seemed to be utterly impractical at that time, the discussion closed with the determination to reconsider the plan, "If God spare us until another Conference."³⁶ By the time the second Conference met it had become clear that this ambitious

³³ Bennet's Minutes, pp. 37-38.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 27.

³⁵ John Wesley, Works, VIII, p. 314.

³⁶ Bennet's Minutes, p. 17.

scheme was still impractical ". . . till God give us a proper tutor."³⁷ But Wesley's interest in education never flagged. Until more formal education could be arranged, he did not neglect the reading and study habits of his preachers.

In the Conference of 1744, the question was asked, "What books may an Assistant read?" The answer is truly astonishing, "Sallust, Caesar, Tully, Erasmus, Castellio, Terence, Virgil, Horace, Vida, Buchanan, G. Test., Epictetus, Plato, Ignatius, Ephrem Syrus, Homer, Greek Epigrams, Duport, Bp. Usher's Sermons, Arndt, Boehm, Nalson, Pascal, Frank, R. Gell, our Tracts."³⁸ Doubtless, this list was more suggestive than compulsory; but, certainly, he would not have posed such an imposing array of classics before a group of illiterate boors, as many would have the public believe the early Methodist preachers to have been.

In 1745 the implication is that three libraries were to be set up in the three largest centers of work, London, Bristol, and Newcastle, for the use of the Wesleys and the assistants. The question was asked in the following way, "What books should we keep for our own use at London, Bristol, and Newcastle?"³⁹ The answer was:

³⁷ Bennet's Minutes, p. 27.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 18.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 28.

Those that follow:--

i. Divinity, Practical.

1. The Bible
2. Our Tracts
3. Ab. Usher's
4. Boehm's
5. Nalson's
6. Frank's (Franck's) Works
7. Pascal's Thoughts
8. Beveridge's Thoughts

} Sermons.

" , Doctrinal.

ii. Physick.

1. Pearson on the Creed
2. Fell on the Epistles
1. Drake's Anatomy
2. Quincy's Dispensatory
3. Allen's Synopsis
4. Dr. Cheyne's (Cheyney's) Works

iii. Natural Philosophy.

1. Nature Delineated. Millar's Gardener's Dictionary Abridged

iv. Astronomy

1. Whiston's Astronom. Principles.

2.
3.

v. History.

1. Universal History

vi. Poetry.

1. Spencer
2. Sir Jno. Davis
3. Milton
4. Our hymns and poems

vii. Latin Prose

1. Sallust
2. Cornelius Nepos, Vell. Patera.⁴⁰ Littleton's Dict.
3. Tully (Tullij) Philosophica, and De Officiis
4. Cypriana (Cypriani) Opera
5. Castellio's Dialogues
6. Erasmi Selecta
7. Austin's Confessions

8.

Latin Verse.

1. Terence
2. Virgil
- 3.
4. Selecta Horatij, (Mart.) Juv. Pers. &c.
5. Vida
6. Casimir

⁴⁰ Velleius Paterculus, the historian.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| viii. Greek verse. ⁴¹ | 7. Buchanan
8.
9.
1. Greek Test., Hederici
Lexicon
2. Plato's Select Dialogues
3. Xenophon's Cyropoedia
4. Epictetus
5. Antoninus de se ipso
6. Ignatius, &c.
7. Ephraim Syrus
8. Macarius, Chrysost. de
Sacerd |
| " Verse. | 1. Homer's Illiad
2. Epigrammatum Delectus
3. Duport's Job, &c.
4. |
| ix. Hebrew. | 1. The Bible. Buxtorf ⁴² |

An examination of these two lists of books shows that almost all of the first are included in the second. But the guiding principle in the selection of these books is not easily understood. Why works like Plato, Tully, Virgil, Epictetus, and Terence were included may be indirectly answered in the Minutes for 1746. "In what light," it was asked, "should your Assistants consider themselves?"⁴³ "As learners rather than teachers:" came the reply, "as young students at the University, for whom therefore a method of study is expedient in the highest degree."⁴⁴ Wesley's list now becomes more understandable. He was prescribing a course of reading that he would have prescribed for one of his students at Lincoln College, Oxford. But it is difficult to imagine the early lay preachers in their endless journeys and ceaseless labors studying the pagan classics.

⁴¹ An evident error for Prose. ⁴³Ibid., p. 36.

⁴² Bennet's Minutes, pp. 28-29. ⁴⁴ Loc. cit.

In 1746 the question appeared, "What method (of study) would you advise them (the assistants) to?" Wesley's reply is important:

We would advise them, 1. Always to rise at 4. 2. From 4 to 5 in the morning, and from 5 to 6 in the evening, partly to use meditation and private prayer, partly to read the Scripture (2 or 3 verses, or 1 or 2 chapters), partly some close practical book of divinity, in particular The Life of God in the Soul of Man, ⁷Kepis, The Pilgrim's Progress, Mr. Law's Tracts, Beveridge's Private Thoughts, Heylin's Devotional Tracts, The Life of Mr. Halyburton, and Monsieur De Renty. 3. From 6 in the morning (allowing one hour for breakfast) to 12, to read in order slowly, and with much prayer, Bp. Pearson on the Creed, Bp. Fell on the Epistles, Mr. Boehm's and Mr. Nelson's Sermons, Mr. Pascal's Thoughts, our other Tracts and poems, Milton's Paradise Lost, Cane and Fleury's Primitive Christianity, and Mr. Echard's Ecclesiastical History.⁴⁵

"Gone, then, are all the Greek and Latin classics;" observes Doughty, "gone the Fathers; gone the science. Of the books of the previous year, only Milton and six writers on religious and devotional themes survive."⁴⁶ He rightly concludes, ". . .that the march and pressure of events and perhaps the expostulations of the Preachers themselves had proved to Wesley how ultra-ambitious his scheme of reading was."⁴⁷ In later years Wesley recommended fewer books by name, but urged his preachers to use the Christian Library⁴⁸ and the Methodist

⁴⁵ Bennet's Minutes, p. 36.

⁴⁶ W. L. Doughty, op. cit., pp. 48-49.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 49.

⁴⁸ Published by Wesley in fifty volumes between 1749 and 1755, "consisting of Extracts from, and Abridgements of, the Choices Pieces of Practical Divinity which have been publish'd in the English Tongue."

publications. Beyond that he referred them to the rather formidable list of books in use at Kingswood.

Although Wesley had to sacrifice the seminary and the classics in the work of training his preachers in the early years, he never slackened his zeal and labors to increase their learning and wisdom. He was constantly advising and urging regularity in reading and study. In 1766 it was asked, "Why are we not more knowing?" The answer was typically Wesleyan:

Because we are idle. We forget the very first rule, "Be diligent. Never be unemployed a moment. . . ."

I fear there is altogether a fault in this matter; and that few of us are clear. Which of you spends as many hours a day in God's work, as you did formerly in man's work? We talk, talk--or read history, or what comes next to hand.

We must, absolutely must, cure this evil, or give up the whole work.

But how? 1. Read the most useful books, and that regularly and constantly. Steadily spend all the morning in this employ, or at least five hours in twenty-four.

"But I read only the Bible." Then you ought to teach others to read only the Bible, and by parity of reason, to hear only the Bible. But if so, you need preach no more. Just so said George Bell. And what is the fruit? Why now he neither reads the Bible, nor any thing else.

This is rank enthusiasm. If you need no book but the Bible, you are got above St. Paul. He wanted others too. "Bring the books," says he, "but especially the parchments;" those written on parchment.

"But I have no taste for reading." Contract a taste for it by use, or return to your trade.

"But different men have different tastes." Therefore, some may read less than others; but none should read less than this.

"But I have no books." I will give each of you, as fast as you will read them, books to the value of five pounds. And I desire the Assistants will take care, that all the large Societies provide the Christian Library for the use of the Preachers.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Minutes, I, pp. 67-68.

Wesley expected his preachers to foster among the Methodist people a love for reading. He constantly urged them to push the sale of the Methodist publications. To Matthew Lowes he wrote a typical letter, saying, "Do all you can to propogate the books in that circuit and to fulfil the office of an assistant."⁵⁰ He also insisted that they:

Preach expressly on education, particularly at Mid-summer, when you speak of Kingswood. "Bit I have no gift for this." Gift or no gift, you are to do it; else you are not called to be a Methodist Preacher. Do it as you can, till you can do it as you would. Pray earnestly for the gift, and use the means for it.⁵¹

In addition to Conference during which Wesley had opportunity for advising his preachers upon ways and subjects to study, it seems that upon occasions he conducted a kind of Lenten retreat or pastors' school. Unable to have a seminary immediately, he held these short courses of study for the instruction and training of his helpers. The earliest record of such a gathering appears in the Journal for 1747. Wesley says:

(Ash Wednesday).--I spent some hours in reading The Exhortations of Ephrem Syrus. Surely never did any man, since David, give us such a picture of a broken and contrite heart.

This week I read over with some Young men a compendium of Rhetoric and a System of Ethics. I see not why a man of tolerable understanding may not learn in six months' time more of solid philosophy than is commonly learned at Oxford in four (perhaps seven) years.⁵²

⁵⁰ John Wesley, Letters, IV, p. 164, London, Sept. 8, 1761.

⁵¹ Works, VIII, p. 316.

⁵² Journal, III, p. 284, March 4, 1747.

Two years later he writes:

My design was to have as many of our preachers here during the Lent as could possibly be spared; and to read lectures to them every day, as I did to my pupils in Oxford. I had seventeen of them in all. These I divided into two classes, and read to one Bishop Pearson On the Creed, to the other Aldrich's Logic, and to both Rules For Action and Utterance.⁵³

In 1756 there are other references to such classes being held.⁵⁴ In many respects Wesley's old life at Oxford still remained his ideal for holy living and devout study. He constantly kept before his preachers a plan of study and a course of training that kept their minds ever reaching outward and upward.

Under Wesley's leadership most of the preachers made genuine progress in the field of practical theology, and some made notable achievements in other fields of learning. Henry Bett in the Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society wrote an article in 1925 on "The Alleged Illiteracy of The Early Methodist Preachers" in which he has done a large amount of research; and though it may seem at times that he over-states his case in an effort to overcome a popular misconception, the facts he presents are incontestable proof that the early assistants were not "ignorant men."⁵⁵

John Wesley upon occasions admitted that his preachers

⁵³ John Wesley, Journal, III, p. 391, Feb. 23, 1749.

⁵⁴ Ibid., IV, pp. 190, 191.

⁵⁵ Proceedings, XV, pp. 85-92.

were "unlearned." But in assessing the significance of his declarations, it is only fair to keep in mind the standard of knowledge that Wesley would have required of a man before he would have called him "learned." The Fellow of Lincoln College ". . . held no man learned unless his classical scholarship were exact and considerable. There were probably not a great many at Oxford, and certainly there were very few indeed among the ordinary clergy, who were 'learned,' according to this standard."⁵⁶ Wesley constantly deplored the lack of discipline and the low scholastic standards that prevailed at the University during his day. "What are the usual examinations for the degree of a Bachelor or Master of Arts?" he wrote. "Are they not so horridly, shockingly superficial as none could believe it if he did not hear them?"⁵⁷

In A Farther Appeal To Men of Reason and Religion, Wesley confronted the charge that his preachers were "unlearned men," and admitted that, "The ground of this offence is partly true. Some of those who now preach are unlearned. They neither understand the ancient languages, nor any of the branches of philosophy."⁵⁸ Yet he was prompt to turn the charge upon the clergy who brought it, saying:

⁵⁶ Henry Bett, Proceedings, XV, p. 86.

⁵⁷ Loc. cit.

⁵⁸ John Wesley, Works, VIII, p. 218.

Men in general are under a great mistake with regard to what is called the learned world. They do not know, they cannot easily imagine, how little learning there is among them. I do not speak of abstruse learning; but of what all Divines, at least, of any note, are supposed to have, namely, the knowledge of the tongues, at least, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and of the common arts and sciences.

How few men of learning, so called, understand Hebrew; even so far as to read a plain chapter in Genesis! Nay, how few understand Greek! ... How few understand Latin! . . . And with regard to the arts and sciences; how few understand so much as the general principles of logic! Can one in ten of the Clergy, (O grief of heart!) or of the Masters of Arts in either University, when an argument is brought, tell you even the mood and figure wherein it is proposed; or complete an enthymeme?⁵⁸

"It was Wesley's clear contention," says Bett, "that his preachers compared well in intellectual equipment with the average clergyman. He showed that the ordinary clergy had only a pretence of learning. He frankly admitted that most of his preachers were not classical scholars... ."⁵⁹ But, as it has already been pointed out, he stoutly maintained that,

. . . in the one thing which they profess to know, they are not ignorant men. I trust there is not one of them who is not able to go through such an examination, in substantial, practical, experimental Divinity, as few of our candidates for holy orders, even in the University, (I speak it with sorrow and shame, and in tender love,) are able to do.⁶⁰

Although the references to the education of the early Methodist preachers is often very meagre in their lives, sufficient material is available to draw certain conclusions.

⁵⁸ John Wesley, Works, VIII, pp. 218-219.

⁵⁹ Proceedings, XV, p. 86.

⁶⁰ John Wesley, Works, VIII, pp. 221.

First, it is clear that the schools for the artisan class in England during the early eighteenth century were fairly adequate and efficient.⁶¹ There was actually less illiteracy about 1750 than there was in 1830 when the rapid growth in population had made the same number of schools wholly inadequate. Generally speaking, if a boy went to school until he was somewhere between thirteen and eighteen years of age in the eighteenth century, he was considered to have had a good or above average education. If he went beyond that or to the university, he had a superior or classical education. If he stopped before thirteen, the chances are his formal training was poor. With this rather arbitrary classification in mind the following figures have been gathered from the sixty-six lives under consideration:

Poor education	15
Good education	25
Superior or classical education	8
Not indicated	<u>18</u>
Total	66

Though many had no classical training in their youth and were considered "unlearned" by Wesley, some went forward under the most trying circumstances and achieved outstanding scholastic success. A section or two from Dr. Bett's careful study will

⁶¹ J. H. Whiteley, op. cit., p. 286ff.

serve to illustrate some of the achievements of the early lay preachers:

. . . an astonishing number of Wesley's preachers who remained in the itinerancy became (in spite of slender opportunities and difficult conditions) really learned men. Thomas Walsh was a prodigy of biblical learning. Wesley said of him that if he were questioned concerning any Hebrew word in the Old or any Greek word in the New Testament, he would tell, after a brief pause, how often the word occurred, and what it meant in each place. "Such a master of biblical learning," Wesley declared, "I never saw before, and never expect to see again." Francis Asbury became thoroughly proficient in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, despite his incredible toils in the wilds of America. The Hebrew Bible and the (Greek?) New Testament that he carried for thousands of miles in his saddle-bags, and read every day of his life, are still venerated relics across the Atlantic. Christopher Hopper and William Roberts gained an effective knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. So did Alexander Coates, and he had in addition the very unusual equipment in the eighteenth century of a knowledge of Dutch and Danish. So did Andrew Coleman, but he had had a sound classical education as a boy and was a prodigy of memory as well, so that at fourteen years of age he had the whole of the Aeneid by heart. So did Thomas Taylor, and spent a stated time, every day, upon the Hebrew Old Testament, the Septuagint, the Greek Testament, and the Vulgate.⁶²

Many other illustrations could be added to these. George Story, who, according to Southey, tried to imitate the erudition of Eugene Aram, says about the early part of his life:

. . . I read the first that came to hand,--histories, novels, plays, and romances, by dozens. . . . I then read "The Lives of the Heathen Philosophers,". . . . I perfected myself in geometry and trigonometry; then I learned Macauley's short-hand; soon after, geography and astronomy, together with botany, anatomy, physic, and several branches of

⁶² Proceedings, XV, p. 90.

natural philosophy. Once I intended studying the law, and read a great deal in "The Statutes at large," and other law books: but the subject was too dry and unentertaining for one of my desultory disposition. I could recollect reading over three hundred volumes, of one kind or another, (some of them were large folios,) before I was sixteen years old. My passion for books was insatiable. I frequently read till ten or eleven o'clock at night, and began again at four or five o'clock in the morning; nor had I patience to eat my meat, unless I had a book before me.⁶³

Duncan Wright was sent to Scotland and immediately began to learn Gaelic that he might speak to the people in their native tongue. "In less than four years," he said, "I could officiate in that language two hours together, without a word of English."⁶⁴ John Jones, one of the first classical masters at Kingswood was the author of a Latin Grammar.⁶⁵ John Downes was a man of exceptional mathematical and artistic talents. Upon his death Wesley devoted over a page of his Journal to Downes' achievements and says, "I suppose he was by nature full as great a genius as Sir Isaac Newton."⁶⁶ Upon occasions Wesley had to lay a restraining hand upon the passion for knowledge among his preachers. In 1768 he wrote to Joseph Benson, ". . . beware you be not swallowed up in Books. An ounce of Love is worth a Pound of Knowledge."⁶⁷

The demanding yet practical example and advice of John

⁶³ Lives, V, pp. 222-223.

⁶⁴ Ibid., II, p. 127.

⁶⁵ A copy of the grammar is to be found in the archives of Kingswood School located now near Bath.

⁶⁶ John Wesley, Journal, VI, p. 46, Nov. 4, 1774.

⁶⁷ , Letters, V, p. 110, Wycombe, Nov. 7, 1768.

Wesley bore abundant scholastic fruit among his loyal band of assistants.

(d) Preaching

As early as 1747 Wesley gave a series of specific rules regarding preaching. It was asked:

Q. 11. How often should our Assistants preach?

A. Never more than twice a day, unless on a Sunday or an extraordinary occasion, of which themselves are to be the judges.

Q. 12. Are there any smaller advices concerning preaching, which it may be useful for them to observe?

A. Perhaps these that follow. 1. Be sure to begin and end precisely at the time appointed. 2. Sing no hymns of your own composing. 3. Endeavour to be serious, weighty, and solemn in your whole deportment before the congregation. 4. Choose the plainest text you can. 5. Take care not to ramble from your text, but keep close to it, and make out what you undertake. 6. Always suit the subject to the audience. 7. Beware of allegorizing or spiritualizing too much. 8. Take care of anything awkward or affected, either in your gesture or pronunciation. 9. Tell each other if you observe anything of this kind.⁶⁸

In 1749, elaborating on point eight, Wesley prepared a small pamphlet for his preachers entitled "Directions Concerning Pronunciation and Gesture." It is divided into four sections: "Sect. I, How we may speak so as to be heard without Difficulty, and with Pleasure. Sect. II General Rules for the Variation of the Voice. Sect. III Particular Rules for varying the Voice. Sect. IV, of Gesture."⁶⁹ The wisdom and sane advice contained therein betray a thorough knowledge of

⁶⁸ Bennet's Minutes, p. 50.

⁶⁹ John Wesley, Directions Concerning Pronunciation and Gesture.

the field and sound almost like a modern text book on public speaking.

In 1764 Wesley wrote to Samuel Furly concerning his style in writing and preaching. Among other things he said:

Clearness in particular is necessary for you and me, because we are to instruct people of the lowest understanding. Therefore we, above all, if we think with the wise, yet must speak with the vulgar. We should constantly use the most common, little, easy words (so they are pure and proper) which our language affords.⁷⁰

Wesley's letters to his assistants abound in direct and sincere advice of this kind about all aspects of their preaching.

In 1770 he warned Christopher Hopper against preaching ". . . too long or too loud!"⁷¹ He wrote to John King in 1775, "Scream no more, at the peril of your soul. God now warns you by me, whom He has set over you. Speak as earnestly as you can, but do not scream. Speak with all your heart, but with a moderate voice."⁷² To James Ridall he wrote in 1787, "If you would not murder yourself, take particular care never to preach too loud or too long. Always conclude the service within the hour. Then preaching will not hurt you."⁷³

These were largely the ideas and rules of Wesley concerning preaching. How did the assistants themselves feel about their principal occupation? Thomas Taylor, one of the

⁷⁰ John Wesley, Letters, IV, p. 258.

⁷¹ Ibid., V, p. 205, London, Oct. 13, 1770.

⁷² Ibid., VI, p. 167, Near Leeds, July, 28, 1775.

⁷³ Ibid., VIII, 27, London, Dec. 17, 1787.

well-known early assistants, says in his autobiography:

There is a gross error which some of our people labour under; namely, that we are not to premeditate on what we are to preach; that God is to assist us in an extraordinary manner; and that all study and meditation are taking the matter out of His hands. Such a practice serves to patronize a sluggish, lounging temper; and is evidently productive of confusion, rhapsody, and nonsense.⁷⁴

There were certain Methodists who believed that study and preparation for a sermon showed a lack of faith in the power of God. A preacher should only pray, open his mouth, and let the Holy Spirit fill it. Nelson and Haime to the contrary, this was not a prevalent notion among the assistants. They could hardly have held such opinions and accepted the Large Minutes with its specific advices on preaching and study. Most of the assistants practiced extempore^{ary} preaching, but that did not rule out serious study and preparation. Nicholas Manners wrote in his autobiography:

. . . I soon discovered my weakness as a preacher, both in respect of understanding and expression. When I began to preach in the country, I could have spoken before anybody, but alas! in London, a sense of my weakness increased so much, that I could hardly preach at all. However, it induced me to diligence in reading, thinking, etc. to improve, if possible, my understanding, and increase my knowledge. For I perceived that though a person properly called to preach, is helped by the Lord; yea, and sometimes far above his ability; yet generally he only helps according to it, by bringing such things to our remembrance as we know, and by giving energy to them. Hence, it necessarily follows, that although without the Lord's call to, and help in, preaching, it will be unprofitable; yet still, he that will not diligently study men,

⁷⁴ Lives, V, p. 53.

books, and things will be a dunce all his days.⁷⁵

John Valton in writing a kindly letter of advice to the younger Joseph Sutcliffe in 1786, expressed the ideal of most of the assistants for their preaching, when he said:

And now, my dear youth, let me entreat you to give yourself wholly up to God, and to prayer. Do not seek so much for the art, as for the unction, of preaching. If you have the art, you will please: if you have the unction, you will save men. Cry to God, my brother, that you may be filled with the Holy Ghost; and that the Spirit may accompany all your studies. You well know the method that I use, and how God has owned my labours. Was my success obtained by seeking to gain admiration? No. You know how familiar and plain my discourses were; and how much prayer, I used for the help of the Lord's arm. Beware that you do not give yourself up to such studies as may only enable you to decorate your sermons, and inform your hearers that you are not one of those 'weak things' that God has chosen to confound the wisdom of the wise. O Joseph, be simple and humble; and both God and man will love and honour you. Never aim to appear the gentleman, but the Christian.⁷⁶

Some of the assistants became excellent preachers.

Thomas Walsh was one whom Wesley warned often about preaching too long and too loud. Nevertheless, his sermons were widely acclaimed as powerful instruments of salvation. He preached twice every day and often spent fourteen hours out of twenty-four in study.⁷⁷ John Wesley deliberately said of Joseph Cownley, "He is one of the best preachers in England."⁷⁸ Many are the references through the Lives to the response that was

⁷⁵ Nicholas Manners, Some Particulars of the Life and Experience of N. Manners, pp. 22-23.

⁷⁶ Lives, VI, p. 122.

⁷⁷ Wesley Studies, pp. 131-132.

⁷⁸ Lives, II, p. 44.

accorded the sermons of the early assistants. The rapid growth and spread of Methodism in those days is sufficient evidence to the power of the preaching of the travelling evangelists.

Very few actual sermons of the earliest lay preachers have been preserved. A few of those coming a little later are found in the Arminian Magazine, a few are preserved in printed form, and a few survive in MSS. A. W. Harrison in the Proceedings⁷⁹ gives a detailed analysis of a MS book of sermons by James Rogers dated 1781. There are three hundred and twenty-two sermon outlines contained in the volume with condensed notes. "The sermons may be said to be entirely scriptural and evangelical," says Harrison.⁸⁰ John Wesley's Notes Upon The Old and New Testament are frequently mentioned and were one of the chief helps of all of the early preachers. "Burkitt and Matthew Henry are the next in order of importance as books of reference." A few other works are mentioned by Rogers, but it is clear that he was "a man of one book" with a practical message ending always with "apply," "enforce the subject," and once with the phrase, "enlarge awfully here."

One of the few early men to print a volume of sermons was Thomas Taylor. The Hypocrite, or Self-Deceiver Tried and Cast included four sermons preached in 1767. In 1789 he published Ten Sermons on the Millenium. The second edition of

⁷⁹ Proceedings, XIV, pp. 66-68.

⁸⁰ Loc. cit.

Sermons Upon Several Important Subjects appeared in 1804. An examination of these sermons reveals an active evangelical mind. Taylor is thoroughly acquainted with the scriptures and uses quotations or chapter and verse references to support and enforce his points. His outlines are always simple, closely developed from the text, and clearly set forth at the beginning of the sermon. Taylor's own evaluation of his style is valid when he says, ". . . it is simple, and I hope clear, seldom making long periods, and generally divided into two or three divisions; for the obscure essay manner, making the text little more than a motto, however in fashion, is what I totally disapprove. . . ." ⁸¹ He writes in a clear and forceful way quoting from a considerably wider range of authorities than Rogers, but still the Bible totally dominates the scene.

Taylor is probably exemplary of the best type of preaching among the early Methodists. Nevertheless, the quality of the less polished preachers could not have been too inferior or their fruits would not have been what they were. The greatest asset which all of these men possessed was not any exceptional skill of composition or rhetoric but an earnestness born of conviction and experience. They were men of prayer, possessed by an insatiable desire to save souls. The God who is in and

⁸¹ Thomas Taylor, Sermons Upon Several Important Subjects, p. 132.

above all crowned their (sometimes feeble) efforts with power and success.

(e) Conduct of Worship

From the very beginning the Wesleys were interested in the form and content of Methodist worship. They were concerned with the participation of all in the act as well as spirit of worship. Consequently, hymn singing soon became a distinguishing feature of Methodism. They taught the assistants and people both what to sing and how to sing it that all might enjoy the widest and most meaningful participation in every service of worship. Time and again these subjects were considered at Conference. As early as 1746 the question was asked, "How shall we guard more effectually against formality in public singing?"⁸² The following considered advice was given:

1. By the careful choice of hymns proper for the congregation.
2. In general try choosing hymns of praise or prayer, rather than descriptive of particular states.
3. By not singing too much, seldom a whole hymn at once, seldom more than 5 or 6 verses at a time.
4. By suiting the tune to the hymns; by often stopping short and asking the people, "Now do you know what you said last? Did it suit your case? Did you sing it as to God with the spirit and the understanding also?"⁸³

Charles Wesley wrote most of the hymns of Methodism, scores of which are still sung by nearly every protestant communion. Inspired by his success and feeling some of the same

⁸² Bennet's Minutes, p. 37.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 37.

impulses flowing through their hearts, many "would-be" hymn writers appeared among the assistants. They naturally desired to try out their new hymns upon their own congregations. The result of such a practice if it became widespread could lead to a serious problem within the movement. It has been seen in another connection that as early as 1747, Wesley enforced his objections to independent hymn writers by admonishing the assistants to, "Sing no hymns of your own composing."⁸⁴ One of the principal offenders in this regard was William Darney, of whom Wesley once wrote, "I shall either mend William Darney or end him."⁸⁵ Darney imagined that he was a poet and preferred "to give out" in the congregations "hymns of his own composing." Wesley, who was held responsible for all that happened in Methodist services, objected to the public singing of Darney's "unchastened rhymes" or any others that he had not seen and approved. In 1782 in the Addenda to the Minutes, the whole matter was raised again and teeth were put into the warning, "Should we insist on that Rule, 'Sing no more hymns of your own composing?' A. Undoubtedly: and let those who will not promise this, be excluded at the next Conference."⁸⁶

The Wesleys did not object to good hymns and in many instances encouraged assistants like John Cennick and Thomas

⁸⁴ Bennet's Minutes, p. 50.

⁸⁵ John Wesley, Letters, IV, p. 275, London, Nov. 6, 1764.

⁸⁶ Minutes, I, p. 160.

Olivers to publish their verses. But they were jealous of the reputation of Methodism and were loath to see anything of an inferior quality assuming its name.

"What can be done to make the people sing better?" was asked in 1765. The answer was, "1. Teach them to sing by note, and to sing our tunes first. 2. Take care that they do not sing too slow. 3. Exhort all that can, in every congregation to sing. 4. Set them right that sing wrong. Be patient herein."⁸⁷ In 1768 it was observed that "In many places the work of God seems to stand still."⁸⁸ Among the answers to the question, "What can be done to revive and enlarge it?" appeared the following on singing and worship:

Beware of formality in singing, or it will creep in upon us unawares. Is it not creeping in already, by those complex tunes, which it is scarce possible to sing with devotion? . . . The repeating the same word so often, (but especially while another repeats different words, the horrid abuse which runs through the modern Church musick,) as it shocks all common sense, so it necessarily brings in dead formality, and has no more of religion in it than a Lancashire hornpipe. . . . Again. Do not suffer the people to sing too slow.⁸⁹

In 1786 the further admonition was given, "Introduce no new tunes. See that none sing too slow, and the women sing their parts. Exhort all to sing, and all to stand at singing, as well as to kneel at prayers. Let none repeat the last line, unless the Preacher does."⁹⁰ Again in 1787 the question was

⁸⁷ Minutes, I, p. 50.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 79.

⁸⁹ Minutes, I, p. 80.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 192.

posed and answered, "Are there any directions to be given concerning singing? A. Let no Anthems be introduced into our chapels or preaching houses for the time to come, because they cannot be properly called joint worship."⁹¹

The Wesleys loved the Anglican order of Worship and advised their assistants in Methodist services held during church hours, ". . . to read the 'Psalms and Lessons, with part of the Church prayers: because we apprehend this will endear the Church Service to our brethren, who probably would be prejudiced against it, if they heard none but extemporary prayer."⁹²

Through these comprehensive directions, Methodist worship everywhere achieved a certain uniformity and avoided many extravagancies; and the desired general participation of all in worship was accomplished especially through congregational singing.

(f) Publishing

Every student of the eighteenth century is aware of the war of books and pamphlets that was waged in the ecclesiastical world of that age. The ". . . combatants on both sides, normally sane and decent people, indulged in such scurrilous

⁹¹ Minutes, I, p. 200.

⁹² Ibid., p. 191.

language and revoltingly vulgar personalities as are an astonishment to a later, yet certainly not a squeamish, age."⁹³ Some of the early preachers were strongly tempted to indulge in the unprofitable passtime. Wesley, ever anxious over the reputation of Methodism, saw the danger of such a practice and in the Minutes of the 1749 Conference asked, "Shall we require every Helper to answer that question, 'Will you print nothing till we have revised it?'" The answer was, "By all means."⁹⁴ Simon suggests that William Darney was the immediate cause of this new regulation. Darney had published a volume of his worthless hymns unknown to Wesley. In 1761 Wesley wrote to Samuel Furly, "I hope we have effectually provided against that evil disease the scribendi cacoethes in our preachers, as we have agreed that none shall publish anything for the time to come till he has first submitted it to the judgment of his brethren in Conference."⁹⁵ In 1765 the rule was reaffirmed and enforced with the warning that whoever persists and breaks ". . . it for the time to come, cannot take it ill, if he is excluded from our connexion. Let every one take this warning, and afterwards blame none but himself."⁹⁶ Again in 1781 it appears that a few were still publishing

⁹³ W. L. Doughty, op. cit., p. 54.

⁹⁴ Minutes, 1862, I, pp. 709-710.

⁹⁵ John Wesley, Letters, IV, p. 163, London, Sept. 8, 1761

⁹⁶ Minutes, I, p. 50.

unworthy volumes and bringing reproach upon the movement. It was asked again,

Q. Have our preachers printed anything without my consent and correction?

A. Several of them have, (not all to the honour of the Methodists,) both in verse and prose. This has, 1. Brought a great reproach. 2. Much hindered the spreading of more profitable books. Therefore, we all agree, 3. That no Preacher print or reprint anything for the time to come, till it is corrected by Mr. Wesley and, 4. That the profits thereof shall go into the common stock.⁹⁷

When all of this has been said, it might appear that Wesley rigorously suppressed creativity on the part of his preachers and arbitrarily banned all of their writing from the press. This is far from the truth. One need only glance through G. Osborn's Outlines of Wesleyan Bibliography to see the large number of the early Methodist preachers who published scores of volumes of prose and poetry during the lifetime of Wesley. Of those one hundred and ninety-three itinerants whose names appear in the "First Race of Methodist Preachers," Osborn lists thirty-three as having published at least one title. According to Osborn, the total number of titles published under these thirty-three names was one hundred and fifty. After carefully tracing the one hundred and ninety-three names through the British Museum, the Bodleian Library, The Methodist Book Room, and the Didsbury College Library, the writer has found that Osborn's Bibliography of these men is incomplete.

⁹⁷ Minutes, I, p. 153.

From these four sources seventy-four additional titles have been uncovered. Also sixteen titles by eight other preachers have been found.⁹⁸ This makes a total of two hundred and forty titles by forty-one preachers.

If a similar study were made of the second generation of preachers it would reveal an even larger amount of material that was published during Wesley's lifetime with his approval. It is clear, therefore, that Wesley's rules on publication by the preachers were not for the purpose of indiscriminate suppression of all writing on their part, but rather to affect a type of supervision and censorship to protect Methodism. In fact, Wesley commissioned some of his most talented helpers to write in his stead. For instance, he made Thomas Olivers "corrector of the press" for the Arminian Magazine and pitted him against Toplady in defense of Methodism. He called upon many others for autobiographies, for experiences of conversions and triumphant deaths, and for sermons to be printed in their magazine. He independently published the lives of John Nelson, John Haime, Silas Told, and others. The publications of these early itinerants were no small contribution to the total revival movement.

⁹⁸ For a detailed bibliography of all of these titles not in Osborn see Appendix D.

(g) Following Trades

It is generally assumed by the term "lay preacher" that a man largely supports himself by so-called "secular" occupations when not about his "religious" duties. That was the case in the earliest days of Methodism. The practice always continued among the local preachers, but very early Wesley began to demand the full time of his travelling assistants. Their precarious financial position, however, often made a temporary reversion to secular work an absolute necessity. As late as 1758 there are references to John Nelson working at his trade of stonemasonry.⁹⁹ But some began to take up trades that could easily be combined with their preaching, such as peddling "pills, drops, and balsams" among the members of the societies.

In 1768 the question was presented at Conference, "Should itinerant Preachers follow trades?" "This is an important question," came the reply. "And as it is the first time it has come before us, it will be proper to consider it thoroughly."¹⁰⁰ A few excerpts from that lengthy consideration will serve to illustrate the problem and the decision in the matter:

⁹⁹ Proceedings, IV, pp. 104-105, letter to John Wesley dated March 17, 1758.

¹⁰⁰ Minutes, I, pp. 77.

The question is not, whether they may occasionally work with their hands, as St. Paul did; but whether it be proper for them to keep shop, and follow merchandize. Of those who do at present, it may be observed, they are unquestionably upright men. They are men of considerable gifts. We see the fruit of their labour, and they have a large share in the esteem and love of the people. All this pleads on their side, and cannot but give us a prejudice in their favour. . . . Is not the thing in question, both evil in itself, (for us,) and evil in its consequences? First, Is it not, with regard to Travelling Preachers, evil in itself? Is it well consistent with that scripture, 2 Tim. ii. 4, "No man that warreth," (takes on him the profession of a soldier, as we eminently do,) entangleth himself with the affairs of this life:" plainly referring to the Roman law, which absolutely forbad any soldier to follow any other profession. Is it well consistent with that word, "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to teaching: meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them?" (1 Tim. iv. 13, 16.). . . Secondly. Is it not evil in its consequences? Have not some ill consequences appeared already? And is there not the greatest reason to apprehend that still worse would follow? . . . For where will it stop? If one Preacher follows trade, so may twenty; so may every one. And if any of them trade a little, why not ever so much? Who can fix how far he should go? Therefore we advise our brethren, who have been concerned herein, to give up all, and attend to the one business. And we doubt not but God will recompense them a hundred fold, even in this world, as well as in the world to come.¹⁰¹

It appears that this advice was not heeded by all because in 1770 the further question was asked, "How can we secure the observance of this?"¹⁰² The judgement of the Conference upon this occasion was expressed with unusual formality and finality indicative of the importance attached to it:

¹⁰¹ Minutes, I, pp. 77-78.

¹⁰² Minutes, I, p. 90.

It is agreed, by all the brethren now met in Conference this 9th day of August, 1770, That no Preacher who will not relinquish his trade of buying and selling, or making and vending pills, drops, balsams, or medicines of any kind, shall be considered as a Travelling Preacher any longer. And that it shall be demanded of all those Preachers, who have traded in cloth, hardware, pills, drops, balsams, or medicines of any kind, at the next Conference, Whether they have entirely left it off or not?

But observe: we do not object to a Preacher's having a share in a ship.¹⁰³

The last sentence, added almost as a postscript, was inserted to protect Thomas Hanby, John Oliver, James Oddie, and those who had shares in ships¹⁰⁴ which indicates that the objection was not to the legitimate earning of money by investments but to the reproach and neglect that petty hawking of medicines and wares among the people brought upon Methodism.

In 1771 Matthew Lowes who was the sole producer and vendor of a "valuable balsam" was forced to give up the itinerancy when he refused to give up his balsam. He served as a local preacher for almost twenty-five years and continued preparing and selling his "useful medicine" to support himself and his family.¹⁰⁵ Three months after leaving the work, Wesley wrote him, "Certainly there is no objection to your making balsam while you are not considered as a travelling preacher."¹⁰⁶ In spite of the necessary exclusion of several

¹⁰³ Minutes, I, p. 90.

¹⁰⁴ Luke Tyerman, op. cit., vol. III, p. 71.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 71n-72n.

¹⁰⁶ John Wesley, Letters, V, p. 289, Norwich, Nov. 10, 1771.

valuable men, this rule was never revoked.

(h) Financial Support

The popular opinion in the eighteenth century was that John Wesley and his lay preachers were well paid for their work by the liberal contributions of the people. Some even went so far as to maintain that they grew wealthy through their activities. John Simon has called attention to a sermon preached and published by George White, a Curate of Colne, in which he vigorously attacked the Methodists. It is of particular interest here because in a note appended to the sermon, White refers to John Wesley and his lay preachers accusing them of "cozening" a handsome subsistence out of their "irregular expeditions." He says:

It appears from many very probable accounts that Mr. Wesley has in reality a better income than most of our bishops, tho' now and then (no great wonder) it costs him some little pains to escape certain rough compliments. As to the under lay-praters, I have reason to assert that, by means of a certain allowance from their schismatical general, a contribution from their very wise hearers, and the constant maintenance of themselves and horses, they may be supposed in a better way of living than the generality of our vicars and curates; and doubtless find it much more agreeable to their constitution to travel abroad at the expence of a sanctify'd face and a good assurance than to sweat ignominiously at the loom, anvil, and various other mechanic employments which Nature had so manifestly designed for them.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ John Simon, The Advance of Methodism, p. 120.

In 1749 William Grimshaw wrote his Answer To A Sermon Lately Published Against The Methodists. "It traverses the whole of White's allegations," says Simon, "and gives us valuable information on the subject of Methodist finance."¹⁰⁸ Not having seen either of these pamphlets by White or Grimshaw, the writer must follow Simon closely here:

As to John Wesley and his income, Grimshaw, who was acquainted with his private affairs, easily refuted White's statement. . . . As to the lay preachers, who, according to White, were supposed to be 'in a better way than the generality of our vicars and curates,' it is certain that White was unacquainted with that 'Rule of a Helper' which commands, 'Take no money of any one. If they give you food when you are hungry or clothes when you need them, it is good. But not silver or gold. Let there be no pretence to say we grow rich by the gospel.' That rigorous 'rule' was in active operation at the time White preached his sermon. Grimshaw, at a stroke, demolished his accusation.¹⁰⁹

Actually the hardships and misery of the lay preachers and their families in those days caused by a totally inadequate income were often pathetic.

In 1751 during Charles Wesley's "tour of inspection," the question of the maintenance of the preachers was raised again. On July 20th John Wesley wrote to his brother:

The Societies both must and shall maintain the preachers we send among them, or I will preach among them no more. The least that I can say to any of these preachers is, "Give yourself wholly to the work, and you shall have food to eat and raiment to put on.' And I cannot see that any preacher is called to any people who will not thus maintain him. Almost everything depends on you and me: let

¹⁰⁸ John Simon, The Advance of Methodism, p. 120.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 120-121.

nothing damp or hinder us: only let us be alive, and put forth all our strength.¹¹⁰

In 1752 the Conference decided that the preachers should receive twelve pounds per year and provide for themselves.¹¹¹ But the societies were slow in complying with this regulation. As late as 1788 it was observed in the Minutes that, "Many of our Preachers have been obliged to go from the house of one friend to another for their meals, to the great loss of their time, and to the injury of the work of God. What can be done to prevent this evil in the future?"¹¹² Still the minimum sustenance was not being regularly provided. "Let every Circuit provide a sufficient allowance for the Preachers," came the reply, "that they may in general eat their meals at their own lodgings."¹¹³ In 1765 a deputation came from York to the Manchester Conference to make a formal protest over the "excessive" sum of twelve pounds annually for each preacher. Their protests did not even get to the floor of the Conference because Wesley refused to hear them, but they are representative of a group that felt rule number nine of the first edition of the "Twelve Rules of a Helper" was still the ideal for a Methodist preacher.

Some of the most popular assistants, however, had no difficulty ^{IN} obtaining their sustenance. In a letter to John

¹¹⁰ John Wesley, Letters, III, p. 70.

¹¹¹ Minutes, 1862, I, p. 715.

¹¹² Minutes, I, p. 208.

¹¹³ Loc. cit.

Liden of the University of Lund, Wesley listed fifteen of those he considered among the "best preachers" and added, "Each of these preachers has his food wherever he labours and twelve pounds a year for clothes and other expenses. If he is married he has ten pounds a year for his wife. This money is raised by the voluntary contributions of the Societies."¹¹⁴ But it hardly needs to be added that none grew rich by being a Methodist preacher.

By 1763 as old age began to overtake some of the first preachers and as they were no longer able to stand the rigors of the itinerant life, it became obvious that some provision would have to be made for their maintenance after retirement. Though the minutes for that year are not available, John Pawson says:

At this Conference in 1763 the Preachers' Fund was first begun. It was said that several of the preachers were growing old, and asked, what should they do for support, if they should live to be past their labour? . . . Being young and inexperienced, I was utterly amazed at hearing this. For I thought that every Christian minister had an entire confidence in God, respecting temporal as well as spiritual things, so as to be perfectly free from all care as to what might befall either himself or family.¹¹⁵

In 1765 the rules relating to the Preachers' Fund were set forth.¹¹⁶ Among other things they provided that each travelling

¹¹⁴ John Wesley, Letters, V, p. 155, London, Nov. 16, 1769.

¹¹⁵ Lives, IV, p. 27.

¹¹⁶ Minutes, I, p. 45.

preacher should pay one half guinea a year and receive upon his superannuation "at least ten pounds a year." Provisions were also made for widows and children. The foundations of a sound financial plan were laid.

(i) Marriage

It has already been observed that rule number four, "Take no step toward marriage, without first consulting with your brethren," if not in the first edition of the "Twelve Rules of a Helper," was soon added. Wesley never went so far as to commit his preachers to celibacy by legislating on the matter; but in the early years of the movement, he taught the superiority of the single state. He made it plain that he expected his preachers to remain single. When Wesley decided to marry in 1751, his attempted apologies were pathetic.¹¹⁷ But almost immediately after that event he wrote, "I cannot understand how a Methodist preacher can answer it to God to preach one sermon or travel one day less in a married than in a single state. In this respect surely 'it remaineth that they who have wives be as though they had none.'"¹¹⁸ In 1767 Wesley wrote the following advice to William Orpe who was contemplating marriage:

¹¹⁷ See John Wesley, Journal, III, pp. 513-516n.)

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 517.

My Dear Brother,--I advise you to tell her immediately, either in person or by letter (whichever you think safest), 'I dare not settle in any one place: God has called me to be a travelling preacher. Are you willing to accept of me upon these terms? And can you engage never directly or indirectly to hinder me from travelling? If not, it is best for us to part. It cannot be avoided.' I am, dear Billy,

119
Yours affectionately.

Fortunately, few of the preachers took Wesley's advice in its extremely crude form. If they had, not many would ever have won a lady's hand; and the marriages of those who did would probably have proved as unhappy as Wesley's.

As early as the Conference of 1753, it was stated, "That the Societies may the more readily assist the married Preachers, ought not their wives to be as exemplary as possible?" "Certainly they ought. In particular, they ought never to be idle, and constantly to attend the morning preaching" (that is at five A. M.).¹²⁰

The wives of the early Methodist preachers were, for the most part, a hardy, long-suffering, gracious company of women. They were kind and patient under the most trying circumstances. Richard Viney in his Diary bears testimony to the generosity of Mrs. John Nelson. John Valton wrote to Wesley in 1782 saying:

I must now desire you, dear Sir, if you can possibly do it, let two wives be sent next year into this Circuit

¹¹⁹ John Wesley, Letters, V, pp. 62-63.

¹²⁰ Minutes, 1862, I, p. 719.

that can lead a class. It is an inconceivable good to have useful women, under a Preacher, that will encourage them.¹²¹

Then, as always, Methodist preachers' wives were the backbone of Methodism.

(j) Support of Wives

Wesley was cautious about the marriage of his preachers largely because of the financial problem. The needs of a single man were naturally satisfied much more easily. At first there was absolutely nothing for the support of preachers' wives. Christopher Hopper writing about the year 1749, said, "In those days we had no provision made for preachers' wives, no funds, no stewards. He that had a staff might take it, go without, or stay at home."¹²² The whole matter was thoroughly discussed in the Conference of 1753 when the question was asked, "What are those hardships upon the Preachers which it is in our power to remove?" The reply was, "One of the greatest is that which lies on the married Preachers. There is no provision for their wives."¹²³

Q. 5: Ought they not to be careful how they bring this upon themselves by marrying hand over head?

A. Undoubtedly they ought. Therefore any Preacher who married without first consulting his Ministers, or his

¹²¹ Arminian Magazine, February, 1790, XIII, p. 106, January 1, 1782.

¹²² Lives, I, p. 200.

¹²³ Minutes, 1862, I, p. 719.

brethren, should not take it amiss that he is then left to himself to provide for her how he can.

Q. 6. But if a Preacher do consult them first, and still if he marry one that has nothing?

A. He must be content to return to his temporal business, and so commence a Local Preacher.

.
Q. 8. But how may they have what is needful with the least trouble?

A. (1) Let the Assistant inquire what each Preacher's wife wants, at every Quarterly Meeting. (2) Let those wants be supplied first of all, out of the common stock. (3) Let a letter be wrote to all the Societies upon this head.¹²⁴

But the stewards and the societies were very slow in taking up the new arrangement. Immediately following the above, it was asked, "Do the Stewards behave well with regard to the Preachers?" "Most of them do," came the reply, but, "some do not."¹²⁵ As late as 1756 Alexander Mather was kept from travelling because the London Stewards refused to provide four shillings a week for the support of his wife. His own poignant account of this sad affair gives a clear insight into the multiple difficulties facing the married preachers:

. . . you (John Wesley) proposed my going to Ireland with you, as a travelling preacher, in the beginning of March, 1756. I cheerfully agreed thereto, as you promised my wife should be provided for in my absence. This I mentioned to one of my friends, who said, "No doubt he intends it; but when he is gone, the stewards will do as they please;" adding, "How can you labour in Ireland, while your wife is starving here?" I thought, however, I will talk with the stewards myself. I did so; and Mr. Broelts and Hobbins asked, "What will be sufficient for

¹²⁴ Minutes, 1862, I, p. 719.

¹²⁵ Loc. cit.

your wife?" I answered, "Four shillings a week." But this they were unwilling to allow. So I remained at my business, till another pointed out, which I followed till August, 1757. It was then agreed that I should travel, and that my wife should have that fixed allowance. This was the beginning of that settlement for preachers' wives, which (with the addition of forty shillings a year) continues to this day.¹²⁶

This provision of a minimum of four shillings a week plus two pounds a year became absolutely essential if the work was to be maintained. In the year 1754 Samuel Larwood, Johathon Reeves, John Whitworth, Charles Skelton, and John Edwards, five eminent assistants in the connection at that time, left the itinerancy and accepted pastorates in independent churches. According to Myles, they ". . . probably would not have ceased to travel if there had been a provision for their wives and children."¹²⁷

A new problem was recognized in the Conference of 1769 when it was stated:

Many inconveniences have arisen from the present method of providing for Preachers' wives. The Preachers who are most wanted in several places, cannot be sent thither because they are married. And if they are sent, the people look upon them with an evil eye, because they cannot bear the burden of their families.¹²⁸

The question was, "How may these inconveniences be remedied?" The solution was ingenious and sound:

¹²⁶ Lives, II, p. 171.

¹²⁷ William Myles, op. cit., p. 77.

¹²⁸ Minutes, I, p. 86.

Let each Society contribute what it usually does now, towards maintaining the families of the married Preachers.

. . .

2. Let the General Steward in each Circuit, see that the sum above-mentioned be paid at the Quarterly Meeting.

3. Let each married Preacher therein receive his share.

4. If any thing remains, let the Assistant send it to the nearest Circuit, where there is any deficiency, till we can procure a General Steward for this fund, at London, at Bristol, and at Leeds.

By this means, whether the Preachers in any particular Circuit are married or single, it makes no difference, so that any Preacher may be sent into any Circuit without any difficulty.¹²⁹

This went a long way towards alleviating the problem. But even with the much greater purchasing power of the pound sterling in the eighteenth century, trying to maintain a home and children on twelve pounds a year must have taken some ingenuity. The final solution had not yet been found, for in 1774 the question was asked, "Are not the married Preachers much straitened?"¹³⁰ "It seems some of them are," came the frank response. "Therefore, 1. Let every Preacher's wife (except at London and Bristol) have £ 12 a year. 2. Every Circuit is to find her a lodging, coal and candles; or to allow her fifteen pounds a year."¹³¹

During the year 1781 the situation became so critical that according to William Peirce, ". . . the circuits were unable to support the wives of the travelling preachers, and Mr. Wesley, for the first time, drew from the preachers' fund

¹²⁹ Minutes, I, pp. 86-87.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 115.

¹³¹ Loc. cit.

sufficient money to meet the necessities of the case."¹³²
 Something had to be done. When Conference met that year, it was discovered that some preachers' wives were living with relatives and friends and still getting the fifteen pounds a year. The question was asked, "Does the rule for giving each wife £ 15 a year, take place with regard to them that live at home? It was never intended so to do," came the response.¹³³
 It was stated further that, "We have neither money nor houses for any more wives; what can we do?" The following action was taken, "1. We must admit no more married Preachers, unless in defect of single Preachers. 2. The Societies that have not houses, must hire lodgings for the Preacher's' wife."¹³⁴

Seven years later the situation had become urgent again. Appended to the Minutes of Conference for 1788 is a personal letter from John Wesley addressed "To our Societies in England and Ireland" in which he reviews the situation in regard to the support of the preachers' wives and the history of the steps taken to provide for them. He closes with these words:

Within these fifty years, the substance of the Methodists is increased in proportion to their numbers. Therefore, if you are not straitened in your own bowels, this will be no grievance, but you will cheerfully give food and raiment to those, who give up all their time, and strength, and labour to your service.¹³⁵

¹³² William Peirce, The Ecclesiastical Principles and Polity of The Wesleyan Methodists, p. 318.

¹³³ Minutes, I, p. 152.

¹³⁴ Loc. cit.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 211.

Many years still had to pass before the physical existence of these devoted, long-suffering women and their children was brought up to a respectable standard.

(k) Personal Advice

In addition to all of the other rules and regulations that outlined the work and duty of a Methodist lay preacher, there were a large number of personal suggestions about bodily health, appearance, care of one's horse, and such things. Pointing out one or two of these items will serve to illustrate how minutely the lives of these men were regulated.

In the Large Minutes the following questions on food and drink were put to all the preachers alike:

Are you temperate in all things? instance in food: Do you use only that kind and that degree which is best both for your body and soul? Do you see the necessity of this?

(3) Do you eat no flesh suppers? no late suppers?

(4) Do you eat not more at each meal than is necessary? Are you not heavy or drowsy after dinner?

(5) Do you use only that kind and that degree of drink which is best both for your body and soul?

(6) Do you drink water? Why not? Did you ever? Why did you leave it off? If not for health, when will you begin again? today?

(7) How often do you drink wine or ale? every day? Do you want it?¹³⁶

In 1778 the question was asked, "Why do so many of our Preachers fall into nervous disorders?"¹³⁷

¹³⁶ John Wesley, Works, VIII, p. 324.

¹³⁷ Minutes, I, p. 136.

A. Because they do not sufficiently observe Dr. Cadogan's¹³⁸ rules;--To avoid Indolence and Intemperance.

They do indeed use exercise. But many of them do not use enough; not near so much as they did before they were Preachers. And sometimes they sit still a whole day. This can never consist with health. They are not intemperate in the vulgar sense: they are neither drunkards nor gluttons. But they take more food than nature requires; particularly in the evening

Q. What advice would you give to those that are Nervous?

A. Advice is made for them that will take it. But who are they? One in ten, or twenty?

Then I advise:--1. Touch no dram, tea, tobacco, or snuff.

2. Eat very light, if any, supper.

3. Breakfast on nettle or orange-peel tea.

4. Lie down before ten;--Rise before six.

5. Every day use as much exercise as you can bear:--

Or,

6. Murder yourself by inches.¹³⁹

In 1782 an item of personal appearance was raised in the following way, "Is it well for our Preachers to powder their hair, or to wear artificial curls?" "To abstain from both," came the reply, "is the more excellent way."¹⁴⁰ On another occasion Wesley admonished his assistants to live by and, "everywhere recommend decency and cleanliness: Cleanliness is next to godliness," he said.¹⁴¹

In 1765 inquiry was made into the matter of the preachers and their horses, "Are all the Preachers merciful to their beasts?" "Perhaps not," was the reply. The following advice

¹³⁸ In 1774 Wesley published An Extract From Dr. Cadogan's Dissertation On The Gout, and all Chronic Diseases, 49 pp. He is here referring to that work.

¹³⁹ Minutes, I, p. 136.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 159.

¹⁴¹ John Wesley, Works, VIII, p. 320.

was then given, "Every one ought, 1. Never to ride hard. 2. To see with his own eyes his horse rubbed, fed, and bedded."¹⁴² Illustrations such as these could be multiplied many times to show how the rules and advice of Wesley reached into the personal as well as public life of his preachers.

(1) Moral Examination

John Wesley firmly believed that the character and holiness of the people called Methodists could be no better than the character and holiness of their leaders. Therefore, his standards for himself and for his preachers were especially high and demanding. At Conference in 1747 it was asked, "Are our assistants exemplary in their lives? Do we enquire enough into this?"¹⁴³ "Perhaps not," ran the reply. Then a series of searching questions was put to them to ascertain whether each had observed the rules about early rising, study, and the ordering of their lives and conversations.

Following the trouble with James Wheatley and persistent rumors that a number of the other preachers were not living up to the standard that he felt was essential for spiritual leaders, at Conference in 1751, Wesley says, "I mentioned whatever I thought was amiss or wanting in any of our brethren. It was received in a right spirit, with much love, and serious

¹⁴² Minutes, I, p. 49.

¹⁴³ Bennet's Minutes, p. 49.

earnest attention; and I trust not one went from the Conference¹⁴⁴ discontented, but rather blessing God for the consolation." This seems to have been a prelude to an annual examination into the character of every Methodist preacher, including John Wesley himself which practice definitely commenced by the Conference of 1753. In the Rowell Minutes for that year, the question occurs, "Have any of you any objections to the life or doctrine of any Itinerant Preacher?"¹⁴⁵ The names of the preachers were then ". . . read over and considered one by one." Any member of Conference had the privilege and the duty to raise an objection to any other member. After close examination, this singular answer was recorded, "We are all well satisfied with each other."¹⁴⁶ Wesley says of the Conference held in London in 1759, "Our Conference began, the time of which was almost entirely employed in examining whether the spirit and lives of our preachers were suitable to their profession."¹⁴⁷

But not always were they vindicated from the charges brought against them. In 1776 the following entry appeared in the Conference Minutes:

Q. 5. Are there any objections to any of our Preachers?
A. Yes. It is objected, that some are utterly

¹⁴⁴ John Wesley, Journal, III, p. 517, Mar. 15, 1751.

¹⁴⁵ Minutes, 1862, I, p. 719.

¹⁴⁶ Loc. cit.

¹⁴⁷ John Wesley, Journal, IV, p. 348, Aug. 8, 1759.

unqualified for the work, and that others do it negligently, as if they imagined they had nothing to do, but to preach once or twice a day.

In order to silence this objection for ever, which has been repeated ten times over, the Preachers were examined at large, especially those, concerning whom there was the least doubt. The result was, that one was excluded for insufficiency, two for misbehaviour. And we were thoroughly satisfied, that all the rest had both Grace and Gifts for the work wherein they are engaged. I hope therefore we shall hear of this objection no more.¹⁴⁸

The practice of annual moral examination has continued until this day.

5. Opposition to discipline

In recognition of the vast amount of power that rested in the hands of John Wesley and the large number of assistants under his authority, the surprising thing is not that there was some opposition to his rule, but that there was so little opposition. Always the preachers maintained the privilege of departing from Wesley whenever they chose. This was their one irrevocable right; and in the beginning it was quite often exercised, as has already been observed. In 1763 there appears to have been some kind of serious opposition to Wesley's authority. John Pawson relates that:

At this Conference some of the preachers began to call in question the power Mr. Wesley exercised over them and the societies. But Mr. (Howell) Harris pleaded his cause effectually, and among other things said, "If Mr. Wesley should, at any time, abuse his power, who will weep for him, if his own children will not?" These simple words

¹⁴⁸ Minutes, I, p. 122.

had an astonishing effect upon the minds of the preachers; They were all in tears on every side, and gave up the matter entirely.¹⁴⁹

It is probable that Pawson's last phrase is an overstatement. Nevertheless, the opposition seems to have been successfully overcome.

In 1784 after Wesley named the "official hundred" in the Deed of Declaration, there were a number of hurt feelings and much resentment. The Conference was in danger of breaking up in disunity for the first time when John Fletcher intervened. The scene is vividly described by Atmore in his MS.

Memoir:

Never while memory holds a seat in my breast shall I forget with what ardour and earnestness he (Fletcher) expostulated, even on his knees, both with Mr. Wesley and the preachers. To the former he said: 'My father, my father! They are your children!' To the latter: 'My brethren, my brethren! He is your father!' And then, portraying the work in which they were unitedly engaged, he fell again on his knees, and prayed with such fervour and devotion that the whole Conference was bathed in tears, and many sobbed aloud. Thus were the preachers, except in the case of one or two individuals who left the Connexion, subdued and reconciled to the glory of God and of His gospel.¹⁵⁰

This was the most serious threat to Wesley's authority though it was often challenged from without and from within the movement.

Wesley frankly and openly confronted all of the objections

¹⁴⁹ Lives, IV, p. 26.

¹⁵⁰ John Wesley, Journal, VII, pp. 5n-6n.

to his powers in a long section of the Large Minutes. After relating how Methodism began, including the acceptance of the first lay helpers and the calling of the first Conference, and the powers that were his, he says in part:

(5) What is that power? It is a power of admitting into, and excluding from, the societies under my care; of choosing and removing Stewards; of receiving or not receiving Helpers; of appointing them when, where, and how to help me, and of desiring any of them to confer with me when I see good. And as it was merely in obedience to the providence of God, and for the good of the people, that I at first accepted this power, which I never sought; so it is on the same consideration, not for profit, honour, or pleasure, that I use it at this day.

(6) But "several gentlemen are offended at your having so much power." I did not seek any part of it. But when it was come unawares, not daring to "bury that talent," I used it to the best of my judgment. Yet I never was fond of it. I always did, and do now, bear it as my burden;-- the burden which God lays upon me, and therefore I dare not lay it down.¹⁵¹

.....
 "But this is making yourself a Pope." This carries no face of truth. The Pope affirms that every Christian must do all he bids, and believe all he says, under pain of damnation. I never affirmed anything that bears any the most distant resemblance to this. All I affirm is, the Preachers who choose to labour with me, choose to serve me as sons in the gospel. And the people who choose to be under my care, choose to be so on the same terms they were at first.¹⁵¹

Though Wesley might here be accused of bigotry, certainly it would be difficult to refute his claim to authority.

¹⁵¹ John Wesley, Works, VIII, pp. 312-313.

6. Willing Acceptance

It sounds almost as if the company of early Methodist lay preachers was an eighteenth century counterpart of the most severe monastic order of the middle ages ruled over by an absolute dictator, who said, "you play the game my way, according to my rules or not at all!" And so it might have been had the leader been different; but as it evolved John Wesley was an autocrat but not a tyrant. The preachers came by the hundreds to surrender themselves willingly, freely, and completely to his direction. In 1779 John Baxter wrote to Wesley from Antigua:

Rev. Sir,

With respect to my conduct as a Preacher, I endeavour to follow your rules. This I do for two reasons: First, because I know none more productive of the knowledge of ourselves, and God; and secondly, because it is to these I am indebted for all the religious knowledge I have. For these reasons I think it my duty to use them myself, and recommend them to others.¹⁵²

The vast majority of the lay preachers did not look upon the rules and discipline of Methodism as a cross to bear; but, like Wesley, they came to see them as the only means to physical, mental, and spiritual health and happiness. Though few of them were as successful in disciplining themselves and in living up to the regulations as John Wesley was, yet his example and rules remained their ideal. When they fell short,

¹⁵² Arminian Magazine, XII, August, 1789, p. 439.

they believed it was a reproach upon them not a reflection upon the rules.

7. Methodist Brotherhood

W. L. Doughty is right when he says that, "one of the ambitions which John Wesley early entertained in respect to his Preachers was that they should become a Band of Brothers."¹⁵³ In the Conference of 1748 considerable space was given to the matter. It was first asked, "What can be done in order to (have) a closer union of our assistants with each other?"¹⁵⁴

The reply came:

A. 1. Let them be deeply convinced of the want there is of it at present, and of the absolute necessity of it.
2. Let them pray that God would give them earnestly to desire it; and then that He would fulfil the desire He has given them.

Q. 3. Would it not then be well that they should be exceeding unready to believe any evil report concerning them?

A. They ought not to believe it till they have seen them, or written to them and received an answer.

Q. 5. What further advice can be given to our assistants in order to their confiding in each other?

A. Let them beware how they despise each other's gifts, and much more how they speak anything bordering thereon.
2. Let them never speak slightly of each other in any kind.
3. Let them defend one another's character in every point to the uttermost of their power. 4. Let them labour in honour each to prefer the other before himself.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ W. L. Doughty, op. cit., p. 66.

¹⁵⁴ Bennet's Minutes, p. 53.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 53-54.

Such rules had their place in establishing the Methodist brotherhood, but probably the most important single instrument of all was the annual Conference. Doughty stated it well when he said:

A more effective means than the annual Conference for establishing such a comradeship could hardly have been devised. There these potential 'brothers' met in remarkably advantageous circumstances; for the most part known to each other by repute: serving in a common cause: strong in a common hope: inspired by a common faith: warm with a common experience of the changed heart. Men cannot, in any particular sense, become brothers if they remain strangers in the flesh and it was impossible that barriers of aloofness and reserve should stand between them as they met around Wesley. Further, men who are enthusiastically loyal to a common leader can hardly be guilty of disloyalty among themselves, and hence there was a widespread knitting of soul to soul as the human intimacies deepened.¹⁵⁶

The only thing to be added to the list of factors contributing to the brotherhood of the early Methodist Preachers is their common suffering. The hardships they endured in the work and the pain they suffered from the hands of the mob drove them together in^{to} a closer feeling of brotherhood. But the annual Conference and the strict connectional organization of the Methodist Church have preserved that spirit of brotherhood among the preachers down to the present when severe hardships and persecutions of an older day have passed into distant memory.

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W. L. Doughty, op. cit., p. 66.

II LATER PROBLEMS

1. Administration of the Sacraments

In the consideration of the work of the early lay preachers, it has been seen that their responsibilities reached into almost every phase of the religious and moral life of the people called Methodists. They did the work of ministers without the credentials of ministers. Yet, in one important aspect they did not perform the functions peculiar to a minister--they were not permitted by Wesley to administer the sacraments. This soon posed a very serious problem for the Methodists, the preachers, and Wesley.

The arrangement Wesley always preferred was that the people go to the parish church and minister for the performance of these functions--baptism and the Holy Communion. But, as the clerical opposition increased, the people and preachers were often repelled from the Lord's Table and actually denied the sacraments. Even where they were not physically barred, however, many refused to take the sacraments from the hands of a minister notorious for his wicked, sinful life. Wesley was in a severe dilemma--he advised the regular participation in the Lord's Supper as one of the most beneficial means of grace, yet, he was unable to provide it in many places because of the attitude of the clergy and the lack of ordained assistants.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ See Henry Bett, The Spirit of Methodism, pp. 84-85 for Wesley's ideas on the sacraments.

Some looked with envy toward the society in London where the sacraments were performed regularly by the Wesleys or their ordained assistants. They also watched those Dissenting members of the Methodist Societies. Did they not go to their own churches and receive the sacrament from the hands of ministers who had not been "episcopally" ordained? Then, also, those members of the societies who had been drawn from the non-religious world and who had had no previous relationship with any specific church rightly asked why they should be forced to take the communion from the persecuting Anglican clergy rather than from their own preachers. It is not surprising that many of the people and preachers began to grumble and grow resentful of the situation. The matter was discussed in the societies throughout the country, and some, especially in the north of England, strongly urged that the Assistants immediately be given authority to administer the sacraments.

About 1755 a number of the most gifted and most successful lay preachers took matters in their own hands and began to administer the Lord's Supper without the permission of Wesley or Conference. Among these were Charles and Edward Perronet, men of education, talent, and piety; Thomas Walsh of whom Wesley wrote later in connection with this very matter, "T. Walsh (I will declare it on the house-top) has given me all the satisfaction I desire, and all that an honest man could give. I love, admire, and honour him; and wish we had six

Preachers in all England of his spirit;"¹⁵⁸ and Joseph Cownley whom Wesley considered "one of the best preachers in England."¹⁵⁹ These were not rebellious malcontents. These were men as capable of thinking and of forming correct opinions as were the Wesleys.¹⁶⁰ They came to the decision that the same God who had called them into His ministry and authorized them to preach the gospel of Christ had also given them the Divine right to administer the ordinances which that gospel enjoined. John Wesley, though he clung to the Anglican church order tenaciously wherever he could, was a reasonable man and saw the justice of their claim. He willingly devoted the majority^{PART} of the Leeds Conference in 1755 to a discussion of the necessity or propriety of 1. the Methodists separating from the Church of England, and 2. the Methodist lay preachers administering the Christian sacraments.¹⁶¹

Charles Wesley's opposition to separation and lay administration at this time was almost hysterical.¹⁶² Though the Conference decided against departing from the Church and the preachers agreed to give up administering the sacraments, Charles Wesley saw that many were unconvinced and left Leeds without a word to his brother, and still thoroughly rankled by

¹⁵⁸ John Wesley, Letters, III, p. 133, London, June 28, 1755.

¹⁵⁹ Lives, II, p. 44.

¹⁶⁰ Luke Tyerman, op. cit., vol. II, see p. 200.

¹⁶¹ Loc. cit.

¹⁶² Thomas Jackson, The Life of Charles Wesley, vol. II, p. 79ff.

the state of affairs. The/situation is clearly set forth in a letter by John Wesley to his brother over a month after Conference:

Dear Brother,--Do not you understand that they all promised by Thomas Walsh not to administer even among themselves? I think that an huge point given up--perhaps more than they could give up with a clear conscience. They 'showed an excellent spirit' in this very thing. Likewise when I (not to say you) spoke once, and again spoke, satis pro imperio. When I reflected on their answer, I admired their spirit and was ashamed of my own.

The practical conclusion was 'Not to separate from the Church.' Did we not all agree in this? Surely either you or I must have been asleep, or we could not differ so widely in a matter of fact!

Here is Charles Perronet raving 'because his friends have given up all,' and Charles Wesley 'because they have given up nothing'; and I in the midst, staring and wondering both at one and the other. I do not want to do anything more, unless I could bring them over to my opinion; and I am not in haste for that.¹⁶³

In the 1755 Conference the issue was settled for the time being, but the circumstances that provoked the whole situation did not grow better--they grew worse!

In 1760 again word came that three of the lay preachers stationed at Norwich had begun to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper in the societies there. They did this without consulting the Wesleys or their fellow preachers in Conference. The offenders were Paul Greenwood, John Murlin, Thomas Mitchell, and possibly Isaac Brown as well, men whose "regularity" up to that time had been exemplary. Like those involved in the first incident, they were respected and

¹⁶³ John Wesley, Letters, III, pp. 129-131.

highly valued by the Wesleys. But Charles Wesley was again greatly disturbed over the threat of separation. Thomas Jackson records several letters which he immediately dispatched to his brother, John, and to several of the leading preachers. The letter to John was not dated, but Jackson thinks it was probably written early in March, 1760.¹⁶⁴ Charles says:

Dear Brother,--We are come to the Rubicon. Shall we pass, or shall we not? In the fear of God, (which we both have,) and in the name of Jesus Christ, let us ask, 'Lord, what wouldest thou have us to do?

The case stands thus. Three Preachers, whom we thought we could have depended upon, have taken upon them to administer the sacrament, without any ordination, and without acquainting us (or even yourself) of it before-hand. Why may not all the other Preachers do the same, if each is judge of his own right to do it? And every one is left to act as he pleases, if we take no notice of them that have sodespised their brethren.

. . . Christopher Hopper, Joseph Cownley, John Hampson, and several more, are ripe for a separation. Even Mr. Crisp says he would give the sacrament if you bade him. The young Preachers, you know, are raw, unprincipled men, and entirely at the mercy of the old. You could persuade them to any thing; and not you only, Charles Perronet could do the same, or any of the Preachers that have left us, or any of the three at Norwich.¹⁶⁵

Within a few days he wrote to Nicholas Gilbert, John Johnson, John Nelson, Christopher Hopper, and William Grimshaw on the same subject. The letters demonstrate his determined effort to prevent such irregularities and how often in the heat of passion he said or wrote things that later he must have sorely regretted. Charles says in his letter to Grimshaw, "Three of

¹⁶⁴ Thomas Jackson, op. cit., vol. II, p. 180.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 180-181.

our steadiest preachers give the sacrament at Norwich, with no other ordination or authority than a sixpenny licence. My brother approves of it."¹⁶⁶ However much truth there might be in that last statement, the fact remains that John Wesley does not mention bringing up the issue again at the following Conference. In fact, he says of that Conference, "I spent. . . two days. . . with the Preachers, who had been waiting for me all the week: and their love and unanimity was such as soon made me forget all my labour."¹⁶⁷ Over a year later John wrote to his brother:

Dear Brother,--Our Conference ended, as it began, in peace and love. All found it a blessed time:

Excepto, quod non simul esses, caetera laeti.

.
I do not at all think (to tell you a secret) that the work will ever be destroyed, Church or no Church. What has been done to prevent the Methodists leaving the Church you will see in the Minutes of the Conference. I told you before, with regard to Norwich, dixi. I have done at the last Conference all I can or dare do. Allow me liberty of conscience, as I allow you.¹⁶⁸

Jackson points out that the preacher who had taken the lead in administering the sacraments at Norwich died about seven years afterwards, and was characterized by Wesley as "honest Paul Greenwood. . . . He could ill be spared; but he was ready for the Bridegroom; so it was fit he should go to him."¹⁶⁹ Though

¹⁶⁶ Thomas Jackson, op. cit., vol. II, p. 187.

¹⁶⁷ John Wesley, Journal, IV, pp. 405-406.

¹⁶⁸ _____, Letters, IV, pp. 161-162.

¹⁶⁹ Thomas Jackson, op. cit., vol. II, p. 197.

the details are not clear, it seems that the preachers at Norwich ceased their irregular proceedings. But it is also clear that John Wesley was not as positive in his opposition as he had been five years earlier.

Added difficulties soon arose in America and in Scotland where there were so few episcopally ordained clergy that the people rarely had the benefits of the sacraments. It was only a matter of time until the question would arise again. Naturally the problem of administration was intimately related to the whole question of ordination. Therefore, the later developments in the movement to bring the sacraments to the Methodists by the hands of their own preachers will be considered in connection with the problem of ordination.

2. Ordination

It is difficult to know what should be done in this question of ordination. The subject is large and one upon which a ~~vast~~ quantity of material has already been written. In the Proceedings alone, there are no less than six major articles on Wesley's ordinations. John Simon, first in the Proceedings and later in his work on Wesley and Methodism, has done as complete a job as present materials ~~have~~ enabled. Here, therefore, only a brief outline of the matter will be given in order to complete the picture of the work of the lay preachers.

As early as 1746 there seems to have been a feeling that a separate order of preachers was being established, and in Conference for that year there was a suggestion of some form of recognition being adopted corresponding to ordination. The question was asked, "Why do we not use more form and solemnity in receiving a new labourer?"¹⁷⁰ Evidently the matter was freely discussed, and the following reasons against the suggestion, which have the unmistakable mark of John Wesley upon them, were given: "We purposely decline it: 1. Because there is something of stateliness in it, whereas we would be little and inconsiderable; 2. Because we would not make haste. We desire barely to follow Providence, as it gradually opens."¹⁷¹ But, evidently, the discussions of Conference had an influence upon Wesley because toward the end of that year he sent word for Joseph Cownley, who became one of his most successful itinerants, to meet him in Bristol. In January, 1747, in the "Old Room" in the Horsefair Wesley, ". . . engaged him in the important office of an itinerant preacher," says John Gaulter, his biographer. "Mr. Cownley kneeled down; and Mr. Wesley, putting the New Testament into his hand, said, 'Take thou authority to preach the Gospel.' He then gave him his benediction."¹⁷² The solemnity and

¹⁷⁰ Bennet's Minutes, p. 35, quoted in another connection on page 258.

¹⁷¹ Loc. cit.

¹⁷² Lives, II, p. 7.

dignity of the brief service can easily be imagined and must have long remained in the memory of Cownley. Nevertheless, this was not an ordination. He was given no certificate nor was he commissioned to administer the sacraments. It was over forty years later that these added powers were granted him. What happened in the Horsefair in 1747 was more in the nature of a recognition than an ordination.¹⁷³ Cownley was set apart in a rather formal way, but there is no evidence to indicate that this method of receiving an itinerant preacher was generally used.

In Joseph Sutcliffe's account of John Wesley's last Conference in 1790, he describes how he and his fellow preachers were received into "full connexion:"

The close of this Conference was very impressive. The twelve young men, or perhaps but eleven, on one of the benches, spoke briefly of their experience, their call to preach; and confessed their faith. After this, Dr. Coke came on the fore bench with the Large Minutes on his left arm and delivered a copy to each, putting his right hand on each of our heads. . . . Mr. Wesley took no part in those proceedings; he kept his seat, but saw the Doctor deliver the Minutes to the twelve, laying his right hand in silence on the head of each. His presence sanctioned the whole. . . . We parted as brothers in joyful hopes to meet again: we parted as the sons of Wesley, from whose hand, through the Doctor, we had received the blessing.¹⁷⁴

Sutcliffe strongly urges that, "This was ordination in every view; what else could it designate, having sworn thus to faith,

¹⁷³ W. A. Goss, "Early Methodism In Bristol, III," Proceedings, XIX, p. 82.

¹⁷⁴ Proceedings, XV, p. 60.

and devotion to the work of the Lord? I do not recollect that this was continued in future Conferences, but am told it followed the Scottish ordinations, and though it was not called ~~led~~ ordination, what else could it be?"¹⁷⁵ Whether this was actually ordination or just another form of recognition service must be left to others to judge; the main interest here is to note briefly those events that transpired between 1747 and 1790 that led Wesley actually to ordain some of his preachers.

Luke Tyerman has preserved in a footnote the following important extract from Charles Wesley's shorthand diary for October, 1754:

October 17.--Sister Macdonald first, and then sister Clay, informed me that Charles Perronet gave the sacrament to the preachers, Walsh and Deaves, and then to twelve at sister Garder's, in the Minories.

October 18.-- Sister Meredith told me that her husband had sent her word that Walsh had administered the sacrament at Reading.

October 19.--I was with my brother, who said nothing of Perronet, except, 'We have in effect ordained already.' He urged me to sign the preachers' certificates; was inclined to lay on hands; and to let the preachers administer.

October 24.--Was with my brother. He is wavering; but willing to wait before he ordains or separates.¹⁷⁶

This was just before the controversy over lay administration at the Leeds Conference in 1755; and John Wesley was at that time wavering as to whether he should permit lay administration, ordain his preachers, or suppress the practice and remain

¹⁷⁵ Proceedings, XI, p. 60.

¹⁷⁶ Luke Tyerman, op. cit., vol. II, p. 202n.

(according to his own claim) within the Establishment. Charles and others prevailed upon him to reject the first two alternatives and accept the last as was shown in the preceding section. John, in turn, persuaded the preachers to accept that decision. In 1760 the question arose again. Once more loyalty to the church prevailed, and the lay preachers who presumed to administer the sacraments were suppressed. But the problems were not solved. They continued to increase.

In 1763 when Thomas Maxfield separated from the Methodists, it severely crippled the work in London. Maxfield had received episcopal ordination and had for a number of years proved an invaluable aid. Wesley's difficulties at that time were further increased by the rapid spread and growth of the societies in other parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland which demanded his constant care. While he was in this state of perplexity, a temporary solution to his problem presented itself. Among Wesley's lay preachers there was a man named John Jones who had been a doctor and a former master at Kingswood. He is described as "a man of good learning and great abilities." In many ways he was well-fitted to take Maxfield's place in the London Society; all he needed was ordination.

At the beginning of 1763 a bishop of the Greek Church named Erasmus visited London.¹⁷⁷ After making due inquiries as

¹⁷⁷ John Simon, The Master Builder, p. 130.

to his credentials, Wesley requested him to ordain John Jones, and the bishop consented. When the news of the ordination reached Charles Wesley, he was furious and when in London refused to allow the "lay preacher" to assist him in the administration of the sacrament. "The result of his opposition was that John Jones, after a time, left the Methodists, was ordained by the Bishop of London, and became the Vicar of Harwich, which office he held for many years."¹⁷⁸

When the news of this unusual ordination reached the ears of the other preachers, many of them longed to have the same authority to administer the sacraments to their long-suffering people. Unknown to Wesley, several of the lay preachers, Sampson Staniforth and Thomas Bryant among them, applied to the Greek bishop and were ordained. When John Wesley learned of this, he was indignant and thoroughly inconsistent in demanding that they renounce their "so-called" orders or sever their connection with him. The whole affair became widely known and provoked a controversy with Augustus Toplady and others in which tempers were lost and the worst side of the eighteenth century religious controversy was displayed.¹⁷⁹ The problem of bringing the sacraments to the increasing membership was left unsolved and continued to grow.

¹⁷⁸ John Simon, The Master Builder, p. 130.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 131.

In 1784 there were fifteen thousand Methodists scattered up and down the seaboard of North America. The Revolutionary War had been lost by England, and her thirteen colonies were gone. The Church of England was no longer the "state church" of the Americas; and the Methodists, who had no ordained clergy, were thus completely deprived of the sacraments. In that year Wesley took a decisive step in the matter of the ordination of his preachers. He took it with reluctance though he had long been urged and counselled as to its justification. In fact, ever since he had read Lord Chancellor King's Account of The Primitive Church in 1746, he had been convinced ". . . that bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently, have the same right to ordain,"¹⁸⁰ and that he was, ". . . a scriptural ἐπίσκοπος as much as any man in England or in Europe; for the uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable, which no man ever did or can prove."¹⁸¹ Wesley was certain of ~~his~~ right to ordain, and on another occasion says, "I know myself to be as real a Christian bishop as the Archbishop of Canterbury. Yet I was always resolved, and am so still, never to act as such except in case of necessity. Such a case does not (perhaps never will) exist in England. In America it did exist."¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ John Wesley, Letters, VII, p. 238, Bristol, Sept. 10, 1784.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 284, Plymouth Dock, Aug. 19, 1785.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 262, Birmingham, Mar. 25, 1785.

On September 1, 1784, Wesley says, "Being now clear in my mind, I took a step which I had long weighed in my mind, and appointed Mr. Whatcoat and Mr. Vasey to go and serve the desolate sheep in America."¹⁸³ The word "appointed" has more significance in light of the Diary entry for the same day where he says, "4 Prayed, ordained R(ichard) Whatcoat and T(homas) Vasey,"¹⁸⁴ as deacons. The following day he ordained Whatcoat and Vasey elders and "set apart as superintendent," by the imposition of his hands, Dr. Thomas Coke.¹⁸⁵ These ordinations took place in Bristol in the home of Dr. John Castleman.¹⁸⁶ On September 18th the three men set out for America. For Wesley's defence of his action see his important open letter addressed to Coke and Asbury and "Our Brethren in North America" in the Minutes for 1785.¹⁸⁷

The case of the Scottish Methodists was in a way similar to that of America. The members of the Scottish societies, ". . . in many instances, were in circumstances scarcely better than those of their brethren in America immediately after the war. There were indeed Clergymen in Scotland; but several of them absolutely refused to admit the Methodists to the Lord's table, except on the condition that they would renounce all future connexion with the Methodist

¹⁸³ John Wesley, Journal, VII, p. 15.

¹⁸⁴ Loc. cit.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 16, for a facsimile of Dr. Coke's ordination certificate.

¹⁸⁶ H. J. Foster, "Bristol Methodist Notes," Proceedings, II, pp. 102-103.

¹⁸⁷ Minutes, I, pp. 179-181.

ministry and discipline.¹⁸⁸

Wesley had no desire for a closer union with the Church of Scotland, even if that had been possible. Therefore, on August 1, 1785, he says:

Having, with a few select friends, weighed the matter thoroughly, I yielded to their judgement, and set apart three of our well-tried preachers, John Pawson, Thomas Hanby, and Joseph Taylor, to minister in Scotland; and I trust God will bless their ministrations, and show that He has sent them.¹⁸⁹

Christopher Hopper in recording these ordinations for Scotland said, "This was a new thing."¹⁹⁰

In July, 1786, the Diary reveals that John Wesley ordained three more, Joshua Keighley who was appointed to Inverness, William Warrener to Antigua, and William Hammet to Newfoundland. Simon says, ". . . in the ordination of Warrener and Hammet, Wesley again 'does a new thing.' . . . In modernized language we should say they were both 'foreign missionaries'. . . ."¹⁹¹ Ordaining for the mission field remained the established policy even after Wesley's death when all ordinations for England were stopped. Tyerman and Simon both affirm that Charles Atmore who in 1786 was sent to Edinburgh with John Pawson also received ordination in that year.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Thomas Jackson, op. cit., vol. II, p. 382.

¹⁸⁹ John Wesley, Journal, VII, p. 101.

¹⁹⁰ Lives, I, p. 221.

¹⁹¹ Proceedings, IX, p. 149.

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 149 and Luke Tyerman, op. cit., vol. III, p. 441.

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In 1787 four were ordained: Duncan McCallum and Alexander Suter for Scotland, James Wray for Nova Scotia, and an unknown preacher for the West Indies.¹⁹⁴ It is interesting to note that Wesley was beginning to have some doubts about his ordinations. On May 20, 1787, before the ordinations of that year, he wrote to Joshua Keighley, "I am quite undetermined whether I shall ever ordain again. . . . I know not but I have already gone too far."¹⁹⁵ Nevertheless, he submitted to the persuasion of his brethren and ordained four more that year; but he imposed new conditions on those sent to Scotland which limited to that country the exercise of the office of an elder. When they returned to England, they were again to act as lay preachers.

In 1788 Wesley apparently decided sometime before Conference whom he would send to Scotland that year. His selection fell on John Barber and Joseph Cownley. He ordained Barber in Glasgow May 18th and 19th and Cownley at Newcastle-on-Tyne June 3rd and 4th. At the 1788 Conference they were appointed to Edinburgh. The Diary for August 3rd says, "ordained six." Not all of these are known, but Simon says that ordination certificates dated 1788 for Robert Gamble and

¹⁹³ Luke Tyerman, op. cit., III, on p. 441 says "five."

¹⁹⁴ John Simon, "Wesley's Ordinations," Proceedings, IX, p. 150.

¹⁹⁵ John Wesley, Letters, VII, p. 384.

and Thomas Owens have been preserved.¹⁹⁶ According to the Minutes for 1788, William M'Cornock, sen., Benjamin Pearce, and Matthew Lumb were sent with Gamble and Owens to the West Indies. It is probable that they all received ordination at the same time.

Still in the year 1788, the following entry in the Diary occasions considerable interest:

Aug. 6. 4 Prayed, ordained A(lexander) M(athe)r
 Aug. 7. 4:30 Prayed. Ordained A(lexander) M(ather).¹⁹⁷

Up to that time Wesley had only ordained expressly for the United States, Scotland, and British possessions in America. Mather's ordination was another "new thing." Simon says, "At the Conference of 1788 he (Mather\$) was appointed to Wakefield, where he stayed for three years. After the death of Wesley, in 1791, he was stationed at Hull. The conclusion is irresistible. In 1788, Wesley ordained a man whom he did not send out of England."¹⁹⁸

In 1789 two more similar ordinations occurred. Thomas Rankin (and Henry Moore) was ordained not as an "elder," as in the case of those who went before, but as a "presbyter in the Church of God." "The new style of wording which appears in this certificate" (given to Moore and a similar one to Rankin),

¹⁹⁶ Proceedings, IX, p. 152.

¹⁹⁷ John Wesley, Journal, VII, p. 423.

¹⁹⁸ Proceedings, IX, p. 152.

says Simon, "indicates a change of purpose in Wesley's mind."¹⁹⁹ It is clear that when Wesley ordained these men as presbyters, he had no intention of sending either of them out of England. "The ordinations of Mather, Rankin, and Moore stand in a class by themselves. They have an air of speciality about them that distinguishes them from all those that had previously taken place."²⁰⁰ William Myles says, "The former of these brethren, Mr. Mather, he (Wesley) ordained a Bishop. or Superintendent."²⁰¹ Henry Moore's account appears in a letter written to the President of the Conference in August, 1837, and is quoted by Simon as follows:

The Scriptural way of ordination by imposition of hands was allowed by the Apostles, and since their time has been allowed by the Church in every age. Mr. Wesley allowed this, and ordained--first, for America--secondly, for Scotland--and thirdly, for England 'when the time should come.' . . . I am the only person now alive that Mr. Wesley committed that power to, and I know that he committed it for the purpose that it should become a common thing, whenever it should be judged by the Conference best to adopt it.²⁰²

Tyerman quotes a letter of John Pawson's which gives further incite into Wesley's intentions:

Mr. Wesley knew the state of the societies in England required such measures to be taken, or many of the people would leave the connexion, and had the preachers, after

¹⁹⁹ Proceedings, IX, p. 153.

²⁰⁰ Loc. cit.

²⁰¹ William Myles, op. cit., p. 175.

²⁰² Proceedings, IX, p. 153.

his death, only acted upon his plan, and quietly granted the people, who desired the sacraments, that privilege, no division would have taken place. He foresaw, that the Methodists would soon become a distinct body. He was deeply prejudiced against presbyterian, and as much in favour of episcopal, government. In order, therefore, to preserve all that is valuable in the Church of England among the Methodists, he ordained Mr. Mather and Dr. Coke, bishops. These he undoubtedly designed should ordain others. Mr. Mather told us so at the Manchester Conference, in 1791.²⁰³

The statements of Myles, Moore, and Pawson show that Wesley's last ordinations had a very unique and far-reaching significance. It is clear, says Simon, that Wesley was thinking of those,

4

. . . critical days, so swiftly approaching, when the Methodist Societies would take up a distinct position as one of the Churches of England. Wesley with much sagacity, in spite of his own prejudices, determined that when those days arrived the Conference should be ready for them, and so made arrangements for the transmission of presbyters' orders to his Preachers. . . . With Mather as a "Superintendent," and Henry Moore and Thomas Rankin as presbyters, Wesley considered that the Methodists possessed men capable of ordaining preachers to the work of the ministry. . . . In view of his wise proceedings and of subsequent events, we cannot refrain from expressing our regret that Wesley's carefully arranged plan was not adopted by the Conference.²⁰⁴

Summary

The work of the lay preachers of early Methodism was vast and varied. Their principal duties were centered around

²⁰³ Luke Tyerman, op. cit., vol. III, p. 443.

²⁰⁴ Proceedings, IX, p. 154.

the Methodist Societies--preaching the gospel, organizing new bands and classes, regulating and ordering those already formed. The work of an assistant was never more or less than that--he was simply an "assistant" to Wesley who did the work of Wesley in the absence of his father in the gospel.

PART II -- THE PLACE OF THE LAY PREACHERS IN THE METHODIST SOCIETIES

The importance of the work that the early lay preachers did in the Methodist Societies and the authority they exercised made their place, inevitably, one of influence and power. Wesley himself always valued and respected them as fellow laborers in the vineyard of the Lord. He maintained his authority over them, but he exercised that authority as a benevolent father rather than a tyrannical lord. He recognized almost from the beginning that to end the lay preachers would be to end the revival.

Although the preachers were greatly esteemed by Wesley, in the world at large their place was one of disdain and scorn. Especially were they abused by the intelligensia of their day in the most stinging satire and lampoonery. J. H. Whiteley suggests that, "Probably Fielding, Smollett, Foote, Chatterton, Burns, and the anonymous lampoonists confused the early Methodist ministers with the roaming 'hedge-preachers,' just as did the general public, many magistrates and numerous

incumbents."²⁰⁵ Whatever was the cause of the abuse, it was widespread and heavy. In 1759 the Monthly Review described Methodist preachers as ". . . the most wild and extravagant, the most ridiculous, strolling, fanatical, delirious, and mischievous of all the Saints in the Romish communion."²⁰⁶

Squibs like that of Chatterton were popular:

He'd oft profess an hallow'd flame
And everywhere preach'd Wesley's name;
He was a preacher and what not,
As long as money could be got;
He'd oft profess with holy fire,²⁰⁷
The labourer's worthy of his hire.

An unknown author has written a long poem on "The Fanatic Saints" of which a few lines are given below:

Is there a Tribe who boast peculiar Light,
Dissent from all, and yet with all unite;
Who think no Mortal uninspir'd can teach,
Yet run ten Miles to hear a Tinker preach;
Wildly interpret ev'ry Gospel-Line,
As if the Whole were writ with bad Design;
.
Hence Botchers now, who scarce can read, or speak,
Without their Shears can earn a Crown a Week.
O! that such slip-shod Saints, to Patching bred,
Wou'd never quit the Needle and the Thread!
Nor give their evil Genius such a Loose
To mount the Rostrum and forget their Goose!
.
Butchers, predestin'd Holy Writ to mawl,
View with Contempt their Slaughter-House and Stall;
In Frenzy's strongest Fit Christ's servants made,
Embracing Bankruptcy, leave off their Trade;²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ J. H. Whiteley, Wesley's England, p. 314.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 315.

²⁰⁷ Loc. cit.

²⁰⁸ Unknown, "The Fanatic Saints," 36pp. At random.

The way that Smollett treated the Methodists in novels and in his History of England is well known. "Burn's Holy Fair," says Whiteley, "was a savage satire on the ignorant ranters of his day and his Address to the Unco Guid attacks the false premises of any form of faith."²⁰⁹ Some of the best minds of the century, in "defence" of the Church of England, attacked these new "irregular" preachers with the vehemence of crusaders expelling the infidels. Others, with no love for the church and only a deistic "common-sense" approach to religion, attacked them for their "enthusiasm." Richard Green has prepared a bibliography of anti-Methodist literature that runs into hundreds of titles.²¹⁰ The vast majority of the intelligensia of the eighteenth century looked upon the Methodist lay preachers as a company of religious fanatics and ignorant enthusiasts led by an "ex-gentleman" of Oxford, named John Wesley who should have known better.

Scorned by the intelligensia, respected and valued by Wesley, the early lay preachers were genuinely loved by the people called Methodists. These young men, (for in the early days most of them were less than thirty) were warmly welcomed into the homes and preaching houses of the Methodists wherever they went. Many times they were snatched from the mob by these devoted people at their own great peril, carried into a

²⁰⁹ J. H. Whiteley, op. cit., p. 314.

²¹⁰ Richard Green, Anti-Methodist Publications. There are actually 606 titles in this volume.

Methodist home, and sheltered there though its owner knew well that his doors might be smashed, his windows broken, and his furniture destroyed. When the itinerant came into a community, he lived and ate in the homes of the members. Humble and bare though those homes might sometimes have been, he was given a place of honor and accorded respect while in their midst.

The people eagerly looked forward to the coming of the preacher to visit the society, to regulate the bands, to take the roll, to issue new class tickets, to advise the leaders and stewards, to settle their disputes, to expound the scriptures, and to preach abroad on the village green. These itinerant preachers moved often from circuit to circuit and were the link that bound the people together and gave the Methodists a sense of unity that was unique. Loved, honored, and obeyed by the people called Methodists, the early ~~Metho-~~
~~dist~~ lay preachers had a place of authority and responsibility among the Methodist Societies.

CHAPTER V

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE LAY PREACHERS TO THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY REVIVAL IN ENGLAND

John Wesley was indisputably the principal instrument of the eighteenth century revival in England. The story of his life and work is really the story of the revival. The contributions of Wesley and Methodism to the religious, social, economic, and possibly political life of England were profound and have been voluminously treated time and again by those both friendly and hostile to the movement.

Another chief instrument in the spiritual recrudescence of that age was the incomparable body of Methodist lay preachers. The preceding pages have endeavoured to show that their position as Wesley's "helpers" or "assistants," i.e., substitutes for Wesley in his absence, doing his work and exercising his authority among the people called Methodists, was the distinguishing feature of their office. Quite naturally, therefore, many of their contributions to the revival overlap those of John Wesley. But it is not difficult to observe a number of unique contributions that these men made severally and collectively.

In this closing chapter a conscious endeavour will be made not to record again the contributions of John Wesley to

the revival. They will only be mentioned insofar as they correspond to the total contributions of the travelling preachers. The task is difficult, and sometimes it will mean only a cursory statement of a point that could be expanded at great length. But the effort here will be to state the corporate and individual contributions of the early Methodist lay preachers as clearly and succinctly as possible.

I RELIGIOUS CONTRIBUTION

1. The Revival of Evangelical Religion

The most outstanding contribution of the early Methodist lay preachers to the "great revival" was the witness they bore to their evangelical experiences. In their conversions, their preaching, and their lives, they witnessed to the Divine Mercy and saving Grace of Christ. These unpretending preachers worked principally among the lower classes of England--a people whose religious illiteracy and spiritual indifference reached its nadir in the first half of the eighteenth century. When the common man of that day thought about religion at all, he thought of the Church, its prayer book, its weekly service of worship, and its sacraments. The religious man, to him, was the one who attended the ordinances of the Church, abstained from outward sin, and was "charitable" toward the needy--one who sought to live a righteous life that he might in some way at the end deserve forgiveness and life everlasting. Religion

had been reduced to a bare, not too strict, moral code.

The Pauline conception of Justification by Faith, the foundation stone of the Protestant Reformation, had fallen completely into disuse and disrepute. The idea that God in Christ forgives the penitent sinner who does not deserve forgiveness and that the pardoning Mercy of God has no relation to a man's righteousness, was a totally strange doctrine to the eighteenth century common man and was vigorously denounced by his minister and bishop as rank enthusiasm. The idea that one and all, moral and immoral, mankind stand in the presence of God as sinners, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and that only through Him by faith can one be saved was a doctrine so little understood that it was called "popish." The common man, untaught in evangelical religion, could not understand this "new" faith that made drunkards sober, thieves honest, harlots chaste and left them happy and confident of God's forgiveness and their salvation. But the power of its truth soon drove it ^{to victory} relentlessly over all opposition. Men came and saw and were convinced.

The early Methodist preachers were among the first to experience this "new" faith which had always been at the heart of the New Testament. Through their impassioned preaching and the silent witness of their transformed lives, they brought literally thousands into that same saving knowledge of Christ. The profound changes in the moral and spiritual life of the

English people that had their beginning between 1740 and 1790 are well known and were largely the result of the revival of evangelical religion. As it has been pointed out before, the role played by the lay preachers in this great transformation, as far as it is attributable to human efforts, stands second only to that of John Wesley in its significance.

2. The Spread of Evangelical Religion

(a) Brought the "new" faith to the common man

Methodism had its largest growth and influence among the working classes of England. The early preachers who principally sprang from the upper levels of this group returned to these classes to render their greatest service. During the lifetime of Wesley, the population of England increased by fifty percent.¹ This rapid increase in population was, of course, largely among the laboring classes of the land. Wearmouth says:

It is scarcely a coincidence that Methodism recorded its biggest advance precisely in those places where the population showed the greatest rise and industrial developments were most notable. . . . The failure of the Established Church to provide for the spiritual needs of the new populations gave Methodism an opportunity.²

Methodism seized that opportunity!

¹ J. H. Whiteley, op. cit., p. 60.

² R. F. Wearmouth, op. cit., pp. 182-183.

John Hampson writing in 1790 said, "The influence of Methodism is no where more visible than among the tanners in Cornwall, and the Colliers in other parts of the kingdom."³ Hampson then portrayed the fierce brutality that prevailed in the communities of colliers like those of Kingswood and Newcastle-upon-Tyne before Methodism came and said further:

The only remedy that was found for these evils, was in the labours of the first Methodists. The change that took place, was rapid and extensive. The moment they became religious, their brutality subsided. In a few years, many thousands of the colliers became well acquainted with the principles of religion; and the consequent reformation of manners was more general, and more complete, than those who knew them before could have supposed practicable. Kingswood, Cornwall, and the neighborhood of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in point of decency and morality among the labouring people, had been nearly upon a par: and it is remarkable that in each of these places, Methodism has been particularly successful. The reformation in these places, may serve in some sort, as a specimen of what was done in other parts of the kingdom.⁴

(b) Reached those Wesley could not reach

These humble preachers of the gospel went to the people they knew and understood the best--the laboring men. They spoke to them in their own language about the good news of Christ. Wesley always advised his assistants to "speak plainly" and sought to follow the advice himself, though at times without too much success. It is always difficult for a university trained man to speak in a language understandable to men

³ John Hampson, op. cit., vol. III, p. 111.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 112-113.

of the lowest levels of education. Upon occasions, Wesley recognized his own limitations in this regard. In October, 1745, after preaching to a group of soldiers, he remarked in his Journal, ". . . I could not reach their hearts. The words of a scholar did not affect them like those of a dragoon or a grenadier."⁵ It is probable that he was thinking of John Haime and his associates and somewhat envying their success. William Green, one of the second generation preachers, in his autobiography bears an interesting testimony to the same truth:

In August. . . Mr. Wesley coming to town, I went with eagerness to hear him. His text was, My son give me thy heart. But he shot over my head; I understood nothing about it. However, I went in the evening to Moorfields, and heard Mr. Murlin (an outstanding early assistant) preach. And there it pleased God to touch my heart.⁶

The point must not be pushed too far because Wesley's tremendous success among the uneducated classes of England speaks for itself in spite of the above references. Nevertheless, there is a truth here. In many instances Wesley's itinerant preachers did have an advantage over him in this regard--they were among their own people; they understood their mentality and spoke their language. Joseph Benson, himself one of the lay preachers, in his An Apology For the People Called Methodists written at the turn of the century has this to say of the early years:

⁵ John Wesley, Journal, III, p. 213.

⁶ Arminian Magazine, IV, May 1781, pp. 251-252.

It is true, the Lay-Preachers, at this period, were not, in general, of that class of men that have been favoured with opportunities of improving their minds by an early education, or much reading. The knowledge of many of them extended not beyond the first principles of Religion, and the practical consequences, deducible from them; 'Repentance toward God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,' and the fruits that follow, 'righteousness,' and 'peace,' and 'joy in the Holy Ghost.' These were the subjects of their daily discourses, in which there was little variety. But such was the low state of religious knowledge among the people, that they were not then prepared for anything higher. It was absolutely necessary to make them well acquainted with 'first principles,' and to give these principles a practical influence on the heart and life, before they were led any further. In these circumstances, the limited knowledge of the Preachers was so far from being an inconvenience, that it was an unspeakable advantage; as it necessarily confined them, to those fundamental points of experimental and practical Religion, which were best adapted to the state of the people. . . hence the Lay-Preachers were far more successful in awakening sinners to a sense of their dangerous state, and in bringing them to a saving knowledge of 'Christ,' than other Preachers of much more cultivated minds.⁷

(c) Prepared the way for Wesley

The travelling preachers were Wesley's best ambassadors. They went into the outlying areas of the kingdom in his name witnessing to the common faith of Methodism that they had learned and studied under his tutelage. They were called "Wesley's Preachers" and happily accepted whatever honor or disdain the name might bring. They sang the praises of their hero and defended him against all attackers. The folk who

⁷ Joseph Benson, An Apology For The People Called Methodists, pp. 264-266.

heard these ardent ambassadors were made eager to see and hear John Wesley in person. A typical letter from Charles Perronet to Wesley describes the preparation by the preachers that so often preceded his visits:

Chinley, March 7, 1746-7

The manner I proceeded at Chester was as followeth; I heard a religious Society was kept in the city, and so I made an enquiry, and found them out; upon which I was desired to preach, and afterwards pressed to stay longer, or visit them again--I think your way is plain, and open into those parts. I desire, if you can, you will allow yourself some time and visit them in your Return from the North. If you intend so to do, please let me know in time that I may give Notice; for the People will come from each quarter. . . . They also desire any of us Helpers in the Gospel may call on them.⁸

In many cases the lay preachers made Wesley's appearance more profitable by preparing the way and by allaying the common people's natural suspicion of a stranger. They were often valuable "liaison officers" between Wesley and the people.

(d) Influenced the Evangelical Party

In describing the purpose and function of the early lay preachers, Wesley continuously told them that they should consider themselves ". . . as extraordinary messengers designed to provoke the regular Ministers to jealousy."⁹ They were "to supply their (the parish ministers') lack of service

⁸ Arminian Magazine, I, Oct., 1778, pp. 471-472.

⁹ John Wesley, Works, VIII, p. 309.

toward those who are perishing for want of knowledge."¹⁰ They fulfilled both of these injunctions. By supplying the "lack of service toward those who (were) perishing for want of knowledge," they actually did provoke many of the ministers to jealousy. But this jealousy did not always spur those ministers on to more serious parish activities; rather, it usually spurred them on to more hostile activities against the Methodists. Nevertheless, in some few instances the local ministers heard the lay preachers with open minds and were convinced. The work and preaching of these laymen did, certainly, stir up some small amount of sympathetic response among the Anglican clergy, who began to preach the same strange doctrines in their churches. In this way the labors of Wesley's assistants accentuated and abetted the work of the Evangelical Party within the Church of England.

The religious contribution of the early lay preachers to the total revival was, then, a recovery of the evangelical witness and experience, principally in the life of the working man--a vital reaffirmation by precept and deed of the spiritual fact that real penitence, real faith, real surrender of the heart and life to Christ bring assurance of forgiveness and the peace of God which passeth all understanding. From this

¹⁰ John Wesley, Works, VIII, p. 309.

experience there naturally sprang a sense of joy and gratitude that led directly to a desire for the righteous life. These were men consumed by an evangelistic passion that made them invincible in the cause of winning souls to Christ. The results in hearts^t renewed and lives changed are an everlasting monument to their labors.

II ORGANIZATIONAL CONTRIBUTION

Methodism was able to stabilize and conserve its rapid gains only because of its close-knit organization. Wesley learned early that mere preaching was not enough.¹¹ Some sustaining protective group was essential if new-born souls were to be nurtured and strengthened against the encroaching world. That organizational plan was not simple, but it proved efficient. The country was divided into circuits.¹² The circuits were composed of societies, classes, and small cell groups called bands, all of which were strictly controlled by rules and regulations. To administer this plan, Wesley organized and trained a large body of laymen into Helpers, Assistants, or travelling preachers, local preachers, stewards, class leaders, and band leaders. ~~Each of~~ These groups, likewise, had rules and regulations governing their conduct and the

¹¹ See above page 133.

¹² It was not until after the death of Wesley that districts were added.

execution of their office.

1. Executed Plans

John Wesley was the architectural genius of this organization which had become toward the close of his life a vast and living thing, vibrant with activity. But no architect has ever planned and erected a structure of these dimensions alone, nor did Wesley. From the very beginning he appointed assistants or foremen to study the blueprints and to direct the other laborers in the construction work. The preceding pages have dealt at length with the responsibilities of these "foremen" in the building program. The results bear sufficient testimony to their success. They carried the message of Methodism into the remotest corners of the realm, establishing societies and organizing bands. It is indeed remarkable that within a few years, despite almost impossible communications, there was hardly a man in the land who had not at least heard of the Methodists; and by Wesley's death there was hardly a man who was not within reach of a Methodist Society. These travelling preachers, likewise exerted a close supervision over those within the fold and were the means of preserving the gains and providing a unifying bond among the societies. Here their success was equally significant.

As the construction and maintenance of Methodism would have been impossible without the organizing genius of John

Wesley, so they would have been impossible without the untiring labors of the lay preachers. These itinerants did not possess their leader's creative abilities, but they did possess a devotion to duty that made them excellent organizers and administrators. Their organizational contribution to the revival was second only to their religious contribution.

2. Influenced Break With The Church Of England

By the close of Wesley's life separation of the Methodists from the Church of England was an accomplished fact; and it is quite certain that Wesley realized this, regardless of his affirmations to the contrary. Many were the factors that brought about this actual break. Lay preaching itself was "irregular" and schismatic; but, undoubtedly, the largest single factor in the separation was the increasing need for the sacraments in the societies and chapels and the constant pressure of the assistants for the right to administer them to the people. The lay preachers were always a threat to the feigned oneness between the Methodists and the Church and ultimately brought about a complete dissolution of the loose ties between them.

III EDUCATIONAL CONTRIBUTION

Reference has already been made to the appalling religious illiteracy so common in the eighteenth century.

Probably the most significant contribution the early lay preachers made to education was in the field of religious training. Through their evangelical preaching and expounding of the scriptures in class meetings, they widely disseminated the fundamental religious truths of Christianity. Besides the intensive training of adults through the classes and bands, there was a regular routine for the instruction of children.¹³ As early as 1745 Wesley translated and published a French tract by Fleury and Poiret entitled "Instructions For Children." He urged his preachers to give them to the children to be memorized. The plan was:

- (1) Where there are ten children in a society, meet them at least an hour every week.
- (2) Talk with them every time you see any at home.
- (3) Pray in earnest for them.
- (4) Diligently instruct and vehemently exhort all parents at their own houses.¹⁴

A few preachers resorted to the printed page in the work of religious training. The theological tracts of John Cennick have already been mentioned. Charles Perronet prepared A Summary View Of The Doctrines Of Methodism. . . and ten other religious tracts that had a wide sale and influence. Thomas Taylor prepared A Concordance To The Holy Scriptures.

¹³ There are those who maintain that Sunday Schools had actually already begun among the Methodists before Robert Raikes first organized his schools in the slums of Gloucester about 1780, e.g., the Sunday School at High Wycombe was conducted by Hannah Ball from 1769 onwards.

¹⁴ John Wesley, Works, VIII, p. 316.

Benjamin Rhodes, John Hampson, senior, Thomas Olivers, John Pawson, and numerous others of the first generation^s of Wesley's assistants published tracts and sermons to aid in the religious education of the Methodists.

The bulk of the material used in their work, however, was that written or condensed by John Wesley. Convinced of the importance of books and reading to the spiritual life of the Christian, Wesley developed his own press and published the best religious literature at extremely low prices, thereby making it available to the poorest of his people. The preachers set the example by reading themselves and exhorting others to do the same. But their exhortations amounted to more than words; they always carried several publications with them, distributing some free and selling others.¹⁵ The Lives are full of incidents about preachers producing an appropriate tract from their pockets to give to a particularly troublesome heckler or a needy sinner. The memory of Charles Wesley and David Taylor at Sheffield, with the bare sword of a drunken dragoon flashing in their faces, bravely handing the brute a copy of "A Word In Season; or, Advice to a Soldier" has its humorous side, but was certainly no laughing matter.¹⁶

¹⁵ The writer is in possession of three sermons published by Wesley at the Foundery during his lifetime that have printed across the title page, "This sermon is not to be sold, but given away."

¹⁶ See page 134.

Nothing can diminish the fact that a great amount of good was done through the distribution of Methodist literature. John Nelson, during his forced march through York, conversed with a few serious persons there and distributed some materials among them. Upon a later visit, he remarked that:

. . . the little books I left them, viz., the sermon on, "Awake, thou that sleepest," and "Salvation by Faith," and the "Extract from the Homilies," and the "Nature and Design of Christianity," had been of great use to them. O what good might be done, if these books were spread through the land!¹⁷

The early lay preachers of Methodism did their best to help make John Nelson's wish come true. Their work of dispelling religious illiteracy among the lower classes was crowned with remarkable success.

Among these same classes, ordinary illiteracy was also widespread at that time. With an eagerness to read the Bible that was inspired by their evangelical conversions and with the added stimulus of the many sermons and books published by Wesley and urged by the preachers, the new illiterate converts were infused with a passion for learning. A number of the preachers had been teachers before becoming itinerants, and almost all of them possessed a "good" education for their day; therefore, it was only natural that many became the centers of new learning, informally teaching the rudiments of reading and

¹⁷ Lives, I, p. 141.

writing among their less literate societies. Wesley maintained that the Methodists were "a reading people," and much of the credit for this must go to the lay preachers.¹⁸

Most of the early masters at Kingswood school near Bristol were lay preachers. Likewise, a few occasional schools organized by Wesley like the one at the Foundery were presided over by lay preachers. Wesley's assistants made a significant contribution not only to dispelling religious but ordinary illiteracy among the lower classes.

IV LITERARY CONTRIBUTION

The contribution of the evangelical revival to English literature has never been considered of any real importance by the professional critics of the past. The prose and poetry of the Wesleys have been dismissed as being only of negligible value. Consequently, the work of their assistants has not even been acknowledged. This is not the place to evaluate the literary works of the Wesleys; however, a few years ago Henry Bett in The Spirit Of Methodism, chapter VI, arrived at some new conclusions concerning the revival literature, and his arguments sound very convincing. He maintains that "Charles Wesley is the greatest of all English writers of devotional

¹⁸ Frank Baker, "Letter," April 27, 1948.

verse. . ." and that John Wesley's ". . . prose style is as powerful and precise an instrument as Swift's."¹⁹ Of Wesley's assistants, he says:

All these early preachers have the same gift as Wesley had (some of them have it in an even greater degree) for writing pure, idiomatic, unaffected English, which stands in the most complete contrast to the pompous prose that was the literary fashion in their day. . . .²⁰

1. Autobiographies

The outstanding literary work of the early Methodist preachers is the unusual collection of autobiographies, The Lives Of ~~The~~ Early Methodist Preachers, that has been the basis of this study. In 1925 the first serious modern appreciation of these lives appeared in Dr. Henry Bett's article on "The Alleged Illiteracy of the Early Methodist Preachers" already referred to frequently. Since 1937 two other detailed literary studies of these biographical accounts have been published: Frederick C. Gill, Methodism And The Romantic Movement, chapter III, and T. B. Shepherd, Methodism And The Literature of The Eighteenth Century, chapter VII. Both Gill and Shepherd agree with Bett's considered opinion in his How To Write Good English when he says:

¹⁹ Henry Bett, The Spirit Of Methodism, p. 199.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 198.

It is instructive to observe that some of the best English in the eighteenth century was written by men who made no pretensions to literary ability--men like White of Selborne, the naturalist; Shelrocke the sailor, and Richard Walter, Lord Anson's Chaplain, who both wrote accounts of memorable voyages; Wesley and some of the early Methodist preachers, in their religious and autobiographical writings. The reason is plain. These writers were not professional littérateurs, and therefore escaped the pedantic fashion which was set by Johnson. They wrote naturally, more or less as they spoke.²¹

It is a strange fact that no critic who has read these lives has dismissed them as rubbish; whereas, all who have studied them carefully are more than generous in praise of their honesty, forthrightness, and unaffected power to communicate their ideas and feelings. Shepherd concluded that in prose style many of the preachers strikingly resemble Defoe. "They have the same seeming simplicity and clarity, use the same homely illustrations; and give the same exact details of events in a colloquial manner. . . ."²² Sufficient illustrations have appeared in the preceding chapters to bear out the truth of these assertions.

Naturally these short biographies are of varying quality. But the best of them hold no higher place in English literature than they do mainly because they are virtually unknown. Having appeared first in serial form in a small Methodist magazine and later published only by the Methodist press,

²¹ Henry Bett, How To Write Good English, p. 40.

²² T. B. Shepherd, Methodism And The Literature Of The Eighteenth Century, p. 162.

they have always had a limited reading public. After the Lives have been read, however, the words of Edward Fitzgerald genuinely express the truth of the matter when he says, "It is wonderful to read pure, unaffected, undying English, when Addison and Johnson were tainted with a style which all the world imitated."²³

2. Hymns and Poetry

There is no collection of hymns and poetry of these men comparable to the Lives. For one reason there was never a very large number published. It will be remembered that John Wesley was forced to rule against the indiscriminate publication of hymns by his preachers after so many of a very inferior quality like those of William Darney began to appear in some of the societies; and it must be admitted that almost all of that which was published has no claim to literary value. There are only a few hymns that have survived at all, but for the most part they are worthy pieces. Reference has already been made to John Cennick's "Be Present at our Table, Lord," "Children of the Heavenly King," "Ere I sleep, For every Favour," "Lo! He comes with Clouds Descending," "Thou great Redeemer, dying Lamb," and several others from his volumes of hymns. Benjamin Rhodes wrote a poem in four parts entitled

²³ Proceedings, XV, p. 92.

"Messiah." The first part is a well known hymn which begins:

My heart and voice I raise,
To spread Messiah's praise;
Messiah's praise let all repeat;
The Universal Lord,
By whose almighty word
Creation rose in form complete.

Edward Perronet wrote a long (279 page) tedious satire on the Church of England entitled, The Mitre, A Sacred Poem. When it was read by John Wesley, he considered it an attack upon the church and persuaded the writer to withdraw it.²⁴ But Perronet is remembered today as the author of one of the most stirring hymns of the church:

All hail the power of Jesu's name;
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem
To crown Him Lord of all.

Thomas Olivers was probably the best known writer among the early Methodist lay preachers. For a number of years Wesley kept him as "sub-editor" or "corrector of the press" for the Arminian Magazine. Independently, Olivers published several short pamphlets of religious verse that were not of the finest quality; but in 1791 he wrote A Descriptive and Plaintive Elegy On the Death of the late Rev. John Wesley in which his grief made him eloquent. It consists of eighty-two stanzas written in a pastoral vein with storms, zephyrs, and shepherds mourning the death of Wesley, followed by an account

²⁴ T. B. Shepherd, op. cit., p. 183.

of his life. A few stanzas will serve to illustrate the feeling he imparts:

Silence ye Storms! nor softest Zephyrs blow,
To dissipate the Gloom which reigns below:
But deepest Shade of Night, your darkest Horror shed,
To aid my pensive Muse, to mourn the silent Dead.

But chiefly Thou, Great Healer of Mankind,
Whose only Balm can ease the troubled mind,
Support my sinking head, and all my pains control,
While I rehearse aloud, the sorrows of my soul.

The man I loved, the man by Thousands priz'd,
By angels honour'd; but by Fools despis'd;
Hath closed his eyes in Death, and left me here in Pain.
To sigh, and mourn, and weep, while Life and Love remain.
.....
When Grief assailed, he heard ev'ry moan,
Wept when we wept, and made our Grievs his own:
Nor would he cease to grieve, while we of ought complain'd;
But strove to bear us up, 'till we our Joy regain'd.
.....
T'was Thus our faithful guide his course pursu'd,
Nor Toil, nor Danger shunn'd to do us good;
But gladly bore the Cross, that we the Prize might gain,
And one with Him and God, through endless Ages reign.²⁵

Olivers was fond of music and wrote the tune, Helmsley, which is still sung in churches of all denominations. But his name will never die as long as Christians sing, for he wrote the immortal hymn, "The God of Abraham Praise." James Montgomery in his "Introductory Essay" to his Christian Psalmist, says:

That noble ode. . . "The God of Abraham praise," etc. though the essay of an unlettered man, claims especial honour. There is not in our language a lyric of more majestic style, more elevated thought, or more glorious imagery; its structure, indeed, is unattractive; and, on

²⁵ Thomas Olivers, A Descriptive And Plaintive Elegy On the Death of the late Rev. John Wesley, Lives, II, pp. 95-104.

account of the short lines, occasionally uncouth; but like a stately pile of architecture, severe and simple in design, it strikes less on the first view than after deliberate examination, when its proportions become more graceful, its dimensions expand, and the mind itself grows greater in contemplating it.²⁶

The first stanza is:

The God of Abraham praise,
 Who reigns enthroned above,
 Ancient of everlasting days,
 And the God of love.
 Jehovah! Great I AM!
 By earth and heaven confessed;
 I bow and bless the sacred name
 For ever blessed.

Olivers also wrote "Come Immortal King of Glory" and "O Thou God of My Salvation" along with several others which are not as well known.

3. Sermons and Tracts

The total number of sermons and tracts that were actually published by these men was not large. Fifty-four sermons by Thomas Olivers, Thomas Taylor, Christopher Hopper, and John Pawson of those printed have been read in connection with this study. As simple instructive essays on the basic principles of evangelical religion, they served a useful purpose in their day. But as literature they are of no value.

A large number of Thomas Olivers' controversial tracts in defense of Methodism are to be found in the S. R. Hall

²⁶ John Julian, A Dictionary of Hymnology, quoted on p. 1151.

Collection of early revival literature at Didsbury College. These are written in clear, easy-flowing, lucid prose. They are impassioned but not acrimonious and possess the power to persuade. Nevertheless, the tracts, like the sermons, served an important function in their day but are very uninteresting reading now. There is not one that survives because of any literary merit.

The total literary contribution of the early Methodist lay preachers to the revival was very small. Their autobiographies and a few memorable hymns are all that have any claim to lasting fame. But among Christian people the reading of their incomparable Lives will always bring a thrill and a challenge.

V SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION

At first it might seem strange to even suggest that the assistants of Wesley made a social contribution to the revival. They were so tremendously interested in the personal aspect of religion that a social concern would hardly be looked for among them because seldom are the personal and social elements of religion combined into a single emphasis. However, the two recent studies by W. J. Warner and Robert F. Wearmouth have come to the conclusion that early Methodism and its leaders did have a very sensitive social conscience. This social concern did not express itself in radical terms or align itself

with revolutionary movements; in fact, it verbally attempted to stand in the conservative camp. Nevertheless, its concern for the suffering and oppressed was very pronounced.

There are fundamentally only two types of social action. There is, first, the "Good Samaritan" type that seeks to serve one's neighbor who has been a victim of "thieves and robbers." There is, second, the type that attempts to rid the highways of marauders by reforming the forces of law and order and thus preventing the evil from repeating itself. Without a ^{eb} ~~date~~ as to which is the best or most Christian form of social action, it is clear that the first was the type practiced by the early lay preachers. This was largely because they had almost no political power and were uneducated in how to use the power they did have to affect social reforms. The very fact that they were the objects of mob violence made them opposed to all kinds of violent redress of grievances. Likewise, John Wesley's absolute loyalty to the throne and quiet acceptance of the economic status quo were reflected in the preachers. They were in no way radical reformers. Nevertheless, they were avid "Good Samaritans." Wearmouth says:

The religion that John Wesley and his followers gave to the common people of this land was not only a channel for Divine mercy, but also for human kindness, the parable of the Good Samaritan in living action. Religion with Divine mercy and human-kindness in it was something rather startling in surprise of beauty among the distressed poor and the toiling masses of the eighteenth century. For the crushed and despised classes to be told over and over again that God loved them, that Christ died for them, that there

was forgiveness for sins through the wondrous Cross, sounded strange in their ears and brought a marvel to their hearts. In addition, acts of tender pity and loving concern done unto them and for them must have filled them with astonishment, while bearing witness to the truth and sincerity of the gospel.²⁷

These itinerant preacher went into the foul pits of disease and human misery that were the gaols of England bringing kindness and hope to the malefactors. They rode in the death carts with the condemned prisoners to the executioner's block offering them the love and peace of Christ. Every week they collected the pennies of the Methodists to give to the "poorer" about them. W. J. Warner has pointed out that this was a very democratic philanthropy. "There were no Hannah Mores in the Wesleyan group. . . . Early Methodism was, in a real sense, a movement of and by the poor."²⁸ The services of love and mercy rendered by the early Methodist lay preachers to their fellowmen form a long a beautiful chapter in the story of their achievements.

VI THEOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION

It has been observed that among the early preachers there were some outstanding biblical scholars. The high opinion Wesley held of Thomas Walsh as a student of the scriptures will be remembered when he said, "Such a master of

²⁷ R. F. Wearmouth, op. cit., p. 202.

²⁸ W. J. Warner, op. cit., p. 266.

biblical learning, I never saw before, and never expect to see again." Likewise, the achievements of Francis Asbury, Christopher Hopper, Thomas Taylor, William Roberts, and Joseph Benson have been enumerated.²⁹ Benson produced an "admired commentary" on the scriptures. Taylor published a very useful concordance that went into several editions. Nevertheless, nothing resembling a first rate contribution to theology came from the pens of these earliest lay preachers. Serious students of the scriptures though many of them were, they could not be called theologians. They were only the sturdy roots and stem indicative of the flowering which was to come. It was not until the early nineteenth century in the person of Adam Clarke that the Methodist preachers produced a theologian of first importance.

CONCLUSION

The contributions of the early Methodist lay preachers to the eighteenth century revival in England were manifold and enduring. It is difficult at times not to be extravagant in praise of these men and their work. But in this assessment of their achievements a sincere effort has been made to avoid all excessiveness. Their work of bringing the light of the "new" evangelical faith to dispel the religious darkness of

²⁹ See above pages 281-282.

the English common people stands second only to that of John Wesley in importance. If the figures were ascertainable, the number of souls won to Christ by this body of preachers would actually be far in excess of those won by Wesley and all of his clerical associates combined. All things, of course, cannot be measured by numbers. Nevertheless, it was through this intrepid band of brothers that Methodism spread so rapidly and so far. Without them the revival would never have reached into the farthest corners of the realm and to many parts of the empire. These were the indispensable foremen who directed and supervised the building of Methodism. They were also the Good Samaritans along every British road lending a helping hand to their less fortunate fellowmen.

But probably their greatest contribution of all can neither be measured nor exaggerated--i.e., the quality of their Christian lives. They were the lives of men who had been transformed by the power of Christ from weak, selfish, sinful men into strong, self-sacrificing, holy men of God. They were neither distinguished men nor brilliant men, but they were good men. They were plain and simple, joyous and unashamed, standing before the world in the name of Christ and in the power of God for all to see and hear. As examples of Christian courage and undying devotion to the service of Christ, they stand unsurpassed to this day.

Lesser beings than geniuses
Leave their marks upon this earth.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

A list of all the Itinerant Methodist Preachers, who have laboured in Connexion with the late Rev. John Wesley, and with the Methodist Conference.¹

The years inserted before the names, denote the period when those Preachers commenced Itinerants. Those marked thus // before the Christian name, were Clergymen of the Established Church before they united with the Methodists; and those marked thus & at the same place, were made Clergymen after their union with them. Those marked thus * died in the work. Those marked thus / departed from it: some for the want of health, and some, it is to be feared, through a defect of zeal; but it would be impossible in all cases to tell the real cause: let it be observed, that this mark does not imply moral guilt. Those marked thus # were expelled. Those without a mark are now labouring with their brethren as Itinerants, or as invalids, nearly worn out in the Lord's service. The date at the end of the names, shew the years when those Preachers died, or when they desisted from travelling, or were expelled.

I have mentioned some very useful Local Preachers, because we are commanded to "give honour to whom honour is due," and they, as a body, have been and are very numerous, and very useful in spreading the cause of Methodism. And L at the end of the name, will shew that they were or are Local Preachers.

N.B. A few Laymen assisted Mr. Wesley as Local Preachers before Itinerancy was established.

THE FIRST RACE OF METHODIST PREACHERS,

From the year 1739 to 1765.

1739. In this year the Methodist Itinerancy began.

// John Wesley, Father of the work, having formed the first Society at Oxford, in November, 1729. He died *1791.

// Charles Wesley, the first to whom the appellation of Methodist was given at Oxford, in 1729, during his brother's absence in Lincolnshire. He died *1788.

¹ William Myles, A Chronological History Of The People Called Methodists. (Fourth edition). Chapter XVI, pp. 445-455.

// George Whitefield, the first of the Methodists that preached in the open air in England. He began that practice in Bristol, Sunday, March 25, 1739. He separated from Mr. Wesley, but continued an Itinerant Preacher while he lived, and was at the head of the Calvinist Methodists. He died in America, *1770.

A.

1756 William Allwood, /1764 ,
1763 John Atlay, /1788
1765 William Ashman

B.

1742 William Biggs, /1751
1743 John Brown, *L. 1759
1743 John Bennet, / 1751
1743 Thomas Beard, * 1744
1745 Cornelius Bastable, *1777
1745 // Rich. Thos. Bateman,
/ 1751
1747 Benj. Beanland, / 1752
1751 Thomas Briscoe, * 1795
1754 Benjamin Biggs, / 1762
1755 John Brandon, / 1766
1759 Daniel Bumstead, / 1775
1759 Thomas Bryant, / 1763
1759 Rich. Blackwall, * 1767
1760 Isaac Brown
1762 William Brammah, * 1780
1763 Rich. Boardman, * 1783
1764 James Brownfield, / 1770

C.

1740 John Cennick, / 174(1)
1741 Alexander Coates, * 1765
1742 William Crouch, / 1752
1746 Joseph Cownley, * 1793
1748 Jonathon Catlow, / 1764
1748 Thomas Colbeck, *L 1770
1752 William Crabb, / 1764
1755 & Lawrence Coughlan, /
1765
1756 John Catermole, / 1771
1756 William Coward, / 1759
1760 Thomas Carlill, * 1801
1761 // Benjamin Colly, *1767

' 1761 John Cockcroft, *L 1790
1762 Robert Costerdine, *1812
1763 James Clough, / 1774
1764 James Cotty, -/ 1780
1764 & Mosely Cheek, / 1769
1764 Richard Coates, * 1765

D.

1742 William Darney, * 1779
1743 John Downs, * 1774
1744 Edward Dunstan, / 1753
1753 Mark Davis, / 1769
1754 James Deaves, / 1768
1764 John Dillon, * 1770
1765 James Dempster, / 1775

E.

1747 John Edwards, / 1755
1762 John Easton.
1762 John Ellis, / 1772
1765 William Ellis, / 1773

F.

1748 John Fisher, / 1762
1748 William Fugill, # 1768
1755 Michael Fenwick, * 1797
1755 John Fenwick, * 1787
1757 // John Fletcher, * 1785
1758 John Furze, * 1800
1762 Wm. Freemantle, / 1766

G.

1742 // Charles Greaves (Graves)
/ 1747
1744 Nicholas Gilbert, * 1763
1747 // Wm. Grimshaw, * 1763
1747 Paul Greenwood, * 1767
1748 Philip Gibbs, / 1749

1751 Philip Guier, *L 1778
 1756 Robert Gillespy, / 1764
 1756 & Thomas Greaves, / 1766
 1757 James Glazebrook, / 1774
 1760 John Gibbs, / 1766
 1761 Joseph Guilford, * 1777
 1762 Parson Greenwood, * 1811

H.

1740 John Hall, *L 1798
 1740 & Jos. Humphreys, / 1741
 1741 & John Haughton, / 1760
 1742 Thomas Hardwick, / 1749
 1743 William Holmes, * 1747
 1744 // John Hodges, / 1750
 1745 John Haime, * 1784
 1745 Samuel Hitchens, * 1747
 1745 Thomas Hitchens, * 1747
 1745 William Hitchens, * 1758
 1745 Eben. Hitchens, *L 1749
 1747 Christ. Hopper, * 1802
 1747 Howel Harris, / 1750
 1752 John Hampson, / 1785
 1753 William Harris, / 1769
 1753 Jn. Haughton, jun. / 1756
 1754 John Hacking, / 1760
 1754 Thomas Hanby, * 1797
 1758 John Hosmer, / 1770
 1759 Rich. Henderson, / 1771
 1760 Thomas Hanson, * 1804
 1761 John Heslop, / 1768
 1761 George Hudson, # 1780
 1764 John Helton, / 1777

J.

1743 James Jones, / 1749
 1743 Herbert Jenkins, / 1753
 1744 Joseph Jones, / 1760
 1745 Samuel Jones, / 1751
 1746 & John Jones, / 1767
 1747 John Jane, * 1750
 1752 Thomas Johnson, * 1798
 1754 Peter Jaco, * 1781
 1755 John Johnson, * 1803
 1761 Francis Isherwood, *1762

K.

1749 Titus Knight, /L 1762
 1750 Thomas Kead, * 1762
 1752 James Kershaw, / 1767

L.

1743 Samuel Larwood, / 1754
 1747 Henry Lloyd, * 1799
 1748 Thomas Lee, * 1787
 1754 Richard Lucas, * 1774
 1756 Matthew Lowes, * 1795
 1760 & William Ley, / 1763
 1753 Samuel Lerick, * 1772
 1765 James Longbottom, / 1770

M.

1740 & Thos. Maxfield, / 1763
 1740 // Charles Manning, /1754
 1742 John Maddern, / 1756
 1742 & Thomas Merrick (Meyrick)
 #-? (/) 1750.
 1742 Henry Millard, * 1746
 1743 // John Meriton, / 1747
 1745 & Richard Moss, / 1752
 1748 James Morris, / 1756
 1748 Samuel Megget, * 1764
 1748 Thomas Mitchell, * 1784
 1749 Jonathan Maskew, / 1759
 1750 James Morgan, * 1772
 1751 John Morley, / 1767
 1751 James Massiott, * 1758
 1754 John Murlin, * 1799
 1757 Alexander Mather, * 1800
 1759 Nicholas Manners, / 1784
 1759 John Manners, * 1764
 1760 John Murray, / 1774
 1760 Thomas Mayer, / 1767
 1761 John Morgan, * 1782
 1762 Matthew Mayer, L
 1764 John Mason, * 1810
 1765 Wm. Minethorpe, * 1777

N.

1741 John Nelson, * 1774
 1757 James North, *L 1799
 1761 Thomas Newall, / 1780

O.

1746 James Oddie, / 1771
 1753 Thomas Olivers, * 1799
 1758 John Oldham, * 1769
 1760 John Oliver, # 1784
 1764 William Orpe, / 1768

P.

1742 & William Prior, / 1753
 1744 // Henry Piers, / 1749
 1746 // Vincent Perronett, * 1785
 1747 John Pearce, / 1752
 1747 Charles Perronett, * 1776
 1747 Edward Perronett, / 1778
 1751 Richard Pearce, *L 1798
 1759 John Pool, * 1801
 1759 Wm. Pennington, * 1767
 1762 John Pawson, * 1806
 1764 Peter Price, / 1768
 1765 & Joseph Pilmoor, / 1785

R.

1740 & Thomas Richards, / 1759
 1742 & Jonathan Reeves, / 1760
 1748 William Roberts, / 1760
 1749 Jacob Rowel, * 1784
 1757 William Rodd, * 1761
 1759 Robert Roberts, * 1800
 1760 George Roe, / 1766
 1762 // John Richardson, * 1792
 1762 Jeremiah Robertshaw, * 1788
 1762 Thomas Rankin, / 1787
 1762 Thomas Rourke, / 1770
 1763 Martin Rodda, / 1781
 1765 James Ray, / 1770

S.

1741 Robert Swindels, * 1783
 1743 William Shephard, / 1748
 1744 John Slocombe, * 1777
 1744 Francis Scott, *L 1787
 1746 William Shent, / 1753
 1747 Thomas Seacombe, * 1759
 1749 Charles Skelton, / 1754

1754 Samson (Sampson) Stanniforth (Staniforth), *L 1799

1755 James Scholefield, # 1757
 1762 John Shaw, * 1793
 1762 George Story, (* 1778)
 1765 Thomas Simpson, / 1784
 1765 James Stephens, # 1772

T.

1740 David Taylor, / 1746
 1743 John Trembath, / 1760
 1743 David Tratham, / 1751
 1744 // Samuel Taylor, * 1750
 1745 Silas Told, *L 1779
 1746 Joseph Tucker, / 1752
 1746 William Tucker, / 1752
 1749 John Turner, / 1763
 1750 Thomas Tobias, / 1767
 1752 John Thorpe, / 1764
 1757 William Thompson, * 1799
 1758 James Thwaite, / 1763
 1758 & George Tizzard, / 1761
 1759 Joseph Thompson, * 1809
 1761 Thomas Taylor
 1765 Barnabas Thomas, / 1781

W.

1740 Thomas Westall (Westell) * 1794
 1741 & Thos. Williams, # 1755
 1742 James Wheatley, # 1754
 1742 Enoch Williams, * 1744
 1744 Francis Walker, / 1753
 1744 Thomas Willes, / 1748
 1745 Eleazer Webster, / 1751
 1745 John Whitford, / 1754
 1745 Rich. Williamson, / 1751
 1746 Edmund Wills, / 1750
 1747 James Wild, / 1760
 1750 Thomas Walsh, * 1759
 1760 Isaac Waldron, * 1782
 1763 Wm. Whitwell, / 1767
 1764 John Whitehead, / 1769
 1765 Duncan Wright, * 1791
 1765 Richard Walsh, / 1773
 1765 Samuel Woodcock, / 1776
 1765 William Winby, * 1772

These names added together make 220.² The whole of these acted as public characters among the Methodists, during the first twenty-five years of their Itinerancy: some for a longer, and others for a shorter period; some in a greater, and others in a lesser sphere. 1. As the Circuits (or Rounds, as they were then called,) were very extensive, the Preachers were almost constantly travelling, and living in the friends' houses. They were greatly beloved by the people, who were witnesses of their piety, both in public and private. 2. As a body they were not very learned, their unremitting labours did not admit of much improvement; though, in this respect some of them were possessed of considerable learning. In general, they were men of sound experience, and mighty in the Scriptures. 3. Their being so often absent from their families, together with their incessant labours, occasioned many of them to desist from travelling.

THE SECOND RACE OF METHODIST PREACHERS,

From the year 1766 to 1790.

A.

1766 John Allen, * 1810
 1767 Francis Asbury
 1776 Robert Armstrong, / 1788
 1778 John Accutt, / 1785
 (1778 William Adams, * 1779)
 1778 // John Abraham, / 1783
 1780 Joseph Algar, * 1804
 1781 Charles Atmore
 1782 Gustavus Armstrong
 1783 Joseph Armstrong
 1783 William Adamson, / 1786
 1786 John Atkins, * 1805
 1787 Francis Armstrong
 1789 James Anderson
 1790 William Aver

B.

1766 Richard Burke, * 1778
 1766 William Barker, / 1780
 1767 // Wm. Buckingham, / 1770
 1768 Robert Bell, / 1769
 1768 Samuel Bardsley
 1769 John Bredin
 1769 Thomas Barnes, / 1770
 1770 Joseph Bradford, * 1808
 1771 & William Baynes, * 1777
 1771 Charles Boon, * 1795
 1771 Joseph Benson
 1771 John Bristol, / 1777
 1771 John Brettal, * 1796
 1772 John Broadbent, * 1795
 1774 Jeremiah Brettal
 1774 James Barry, * 1783

² Actually there are 221 names in the above list including the two Wesleys and Whitefield. Excluding them, the total is 218.

~~1774 James Barry, *~~ 1783
 1774 Samuel Bradburn
 1775 John Beanland, * 1798
 1775 Hugh Brown, / 1777
 1776 George Brown
 1776 (1784) Robert Carr
 Brackenbury
 1776 William Boothby, * 1801
 1777 John Blades, / 1779
 1778 Andrew Blair, * 1793
 1778 Jonathan Brown
 1778 Robert Blake, / 1784
 1779 George Button
 1779 John Booth
 1779 Thomas Barber
 1780 Robert Bridge, / 1790
 1781 John Barber
 1781 James Bogie
 1782 Samuel Botts, * 1812
 1782 Thomas Bartholomew,
 1783 Charles Bond, / 1793
 1783 Edward Burbeck, * 1788
 1784 Wm. Butterfield, * 1795
 1785 Charles Bland, * 1804
 1785 John Baxter, * 1805
 1785 James Byron
 1785 Wm. Blagborne, / 1809
 1786 George Baldwin, * 1810
 1786 John Barrett
 1786 John Beaumont
 1786 Samuel Bates, * 1803
 1786 Thos. Broadbent, / 1799
 1786 William Bramwell
 1786 William Black
 1787 David Barrowclough, #1806
 1787 John Burnett, * 1788
 1787 John Black, * 1790
 1789 William Brandon, / 1791
 1790 John Braithwaite
 1790 John Boyle, / 1802
 1790 Joseph Burgess
 1790 Thomas Brown
 1790 William Brazier

C.

1767 Thomas Cherry, * 1772
 1767 William Collins, * 1797
 1768 Jonathan Crowle, / 1776

1770 & Rich. Caddock, / 1773
 1772 John Christian, / 1777
 1774 Thomas Corbett, * 1789
 1775 John Crook, * 1805
 1775 & John Cockson, / 1780
 1776 Richard Cundy, * 1803
 1776 // Thomas Coke
 1777 William Church, / 1790
 1779 James Christie, / 1799
 1779 John Crickett, * 1806
 1780 Joseph Cole
 1780 Jonathan Cousins, * 1805
 1781 Thomas Cooper
 1782 Adam Clarke
 1783 John Cowmeadow, * 1787
 1783 John Crosby
 1783 // James Creighton
 1784 Jonathan Crowther
 1784 Timothy Crowther
 1784 John Clark, / 1791
 1784 Richard Cornish, * 1796
 1785 Andrew Coleman, * 1786
 1786 William Cowen, / 1787
 1787 Joseph Cross, / 1800
 1787 Thomas Crossley, / 1788
 1789 Robert Crowther
 1789 William Cox, * 1809
 1790 John Cross, / 1796

D.

1766 Thoma's Dancer, / 1767
 1768 John Duncan, / 1772
 1769 Thomas Dixon
 1772 Robert Dall
 1772 Robert Davis, / 1783
 1773 William Dufton, / 1792
 1774 Andrew Delap, / 1779
 1777 Peter Dean, # 1778
 1779 Thomas Davis, / 1808
 1780 George Dice, / 1786
 1780 Simon Day
 1784 // Richard Dillon, / 1787
 1785 John Dinnen
 1785 John Dequeteville
 1787 John Darragh, * 1806
 1787 // Peard Dickenson, *
 1802
 1788 Richard Drew, # 1792

1788 Thomas Dunn, * 1802
 1788 Thomas Dobson, / 1802
 1789 George Donovan, / 1794
 1789 John Denton
 1789 Owen Davis
 1789 William Dieuade, # 1797
 1790 Blakely Dowling
 1790 John Dean
 1790 William Denton, * 1796
 1790 John Doncaster

E.

1769 David Evans, / 1783
 1771 Rob. Empringham, * 1792
 1771 Thomas Eden, / 1772
 1772 William Eells, / 1788
 1780 Edward Evans, / 1782
 1781 Thomas Ellis, / 1790
 1783 Samuel Edwards, / 1788
 1786 James Evans
 1786 Jonathan Edmondson
 1787 Joseph Entwisle
 1788 Thomas Elliott, * 1794
 1790 Richard Elliott,

F.

1769 Joseph Fothergill, / 1770
 1770 John Floyde, / 1782
 1774 Peter Ferguson, / 1776
 1774 John Francis, / 1776
 1780 Henry Foster, * 1787
 1785 William Fish
 1786 Francis Frazier, * 1789
 1788 John Furness
 1790 Thomas Fearnley
 1790 William Ferguson
 1790 William Franklin, / 1796

G.

1768 John Goodwin, * 1808
 1768 Joseph Garnett, * 1775
 1774 George Guthrie, / 1778
 1776 James Gaffney, * 1779
 1778 William Gill, / 1779
 1780 George Gibbon
 1780 William Green, / 1796

1782 John Glascott, / 1783
 1784 Walter Griffith
 1785 John Gaulter
 1785 Robert Gamble, * 1791
 1786 David Gordon, * 1800
 1786 James Gore, * 1790
 1786 John Grace, * 1812
 1786 John Gilles, # 1798
 1786 Thomas Gill
 1786 Michael Griffith, / 1787
 1787 Samuel Gates
 1788 Daniel Graham, * 1794
 1790 Charles Graham
 1790 Edward Gibbon
 1790 John Graham
 1790 Thomas Greaves, / 1797
 1790 John Grant, * 1811

H.

1766 Lancelot Harrison, * 1806
 1766 Thomas Holiday, / 1786
 1766 // John Harmer, / 1772
 1767 Joseph Harper
 1767 William Hunter, * 1798
 1767 William Harry, / 1770
 1769 & James Hudson, / 1777
 1769 Jonathan Hern, # 1791
 1770 William Horner
 1771 James Hindmarsh, / 1783
 1773 Richard Hunt, / 1774
 1774 Robert Heyward, * 1803
 1776 James Hall, # 1798
 1776 John Harrison, * 1777
 1776 Thomas Hoskins, * 1778
 1777 & John Hampson, jun., / 1785
 1777 John Howe, / 1789
 1779 Robert Hopkins
 1780 Samuel Hodgson, * 1795
 1781 Philip Hardcastle
 1782 William Hoskins, / 1789
 1782 George Holder
 1782 William Holmes
 1783 T. Hetherington, / 1791
 1784 & Melville Horne, / 1787
 1784 William Hammett, / 1791
 1785 William Hunter, jun.
 1786 George Highfield

1786 John Harper, / 1799
 1786 William Heath, / 1808
 1787 John Holmes, / 1789
 1787 Geo. Henderson, / 1788
 1787 Robert Harrison
 1787 Thomas Hewit, * 1801
 1788 Andrew Hamilton
 1788 John Hicklin
 1788 William Hamilton
 1789 Andrew Hamilton, jun.
 1789 Thomas Hutton
 1790 John Hurley, * 1801
 1790 James Hurley, / 1792
 1790 Robert Harrison, jun.
 1790 Thomas Harrison
 1790 William Hainsworth

J.

1767 Thomas Jane, / 1771
 1777 Edward Jackson, * 1806
 1778 Daniel Jackson
 1780 Andrew Inglis, # 1793
 1781 James Jordan
 1781 John Ingham, # 1786
 1783 Joseph Jerom, / 1798
 1783 Matthias Joyce
 1783 Robert Johnson
 1785 & Thomas Jones, / 1790
 1787 Andrew Jeffries, / 1790
 1787 William Jouglin, / 1788
 1787 William Johnson, / 1794
 1787 William Jessop
 1788 William Jenkins
 1789 James Irwin

K.

1774 Arthur Kershaw, / 1775
 1780 Joshua Keighley, * 1788
 1782 John Kerr
 1783 John King
 1783 Lawrence Kane
 1784 Charles Kyte, * 1802
 1785 Alex. Kilham, #, 1796
 1786 Stephen Kelshall, / 1787
 1786 Duncan Kay
 1787 Thomas Kerr
 1788 John Kershaw

1788 Thomas Kelk

L.

1772 William Linnell, / 1773
 1773 John Leach, * 1810
 1774 // Wm. Leicester, *1777
 1774 Robert Lindsay, / 1788
 1776 William Lumley, * 1777
 1778 John Livermore, * 1783
 1780 Thomas Longley, * 1809
 1783 Matthew Lumb
 1786 Theophilus Lessey
 1787 Benjamin Leggat
 1788 George Lowe
 1788 James Lyons, / 1792
 1788 Nebuchad. Lee, / 1791
 1789 Robert Lomas, * 1810
 1790 James Lawton, / 1797
 1790 James Lyons, jun. / 1796
 1790 Isaac Lilly

M.

1766 Alexander M'Nab, / 1783
 1767 John Magor, / 1770
 1769 John M'Nesse, / 1772
 1769 Thomas Mott, * 1773
 1770 George Howat
 1770 & John M'Avoy, / 1773
 1770 Michael M'Daniel, * 1775
 1772 John M'Burney, * 1779
 1772 William Martin, * 1775
 1773 Joseph Moore, / 1779
 1773 Mich. Moorhouse, / 1786
 1774 John Moon, * 1801
 1774 William Moore, / 1785
 1774 Peter Mill, * 1806
 1775 Duncan M'Allum
 1776 John Mayley, * 1788
 1777 Hugh Moore, / 1790
 1777 William Myles
 1778 (9) Wm. M'Cornock, *1789
 1779 Henry Moore
 1779 Samuel Mitchell, / 1799
 1780 John Millar, * 1796
 1784 James M'Donald
 1784 James M'Caddin, / 1786
 1784 John M'Kersey, * 1800

1786 Abraham Moseley, / 1805
 1786 John Mann
 1786 John M'Geary, / 1793
 1786 Samuel Moorhead
 1787 James Mann
 1787 John Melcomson
 1787 (9) Miles Martindale
 1787 Michael Marshall, * 1794
 1787 William M'Cornock, jun.
 1788 Alexander Moore
 1788 James M'Mullin, * 1804
 1788 Michael Murphy
 1788 Robert Miller
 1789 James M'Quigg
 1789 Robert M'Kay, / 1790
 1790 Archibald Murdock
 1790 John M'Vean, / 1797

N.

1770 Stephen Nichols, / 1771
 1778 John Norris, * 1782
 1778 Robert Naylor, * 1783
 1789 John Nelson
 1790 Booth Newton, * 1811

O.

1782 John Ogylvie
 1785 Thomas Owens, * 1808

P.

1766 Marmaduke Pawson, *L 1798
 1767 John Peacock, * 1803
 1768 Stephen Proctor, / 1782
 1769 William Pitt, / 1772
 1770 James Perfect, # 1785
 1771 John Pritchard
 1771 Nehemiah Price, / 1790
 1771 William Plowes, *L 1797
 1772 John Price
 1772 Thomas Payne, * 1783
 1773 William Percival, * 1803
 1775 John Prickard, * 1784
 1776 Joseph Pescod, * 1805
 1781 Christ. Peacock, * 1786
 1782 Jonathan Parkin
 1784 Benjamin Pearce, * 1795

1784 William Palmer
 1785 John Phillips, / 1786
 1787 Hugh Pugh, * 1789
 1787 George Phillips, / 1789
 1788 Richard Phillips, / 1789
 1789 Thomas Paterson
 1790 John Pipe

R.

1766 Benjamin Rhodes
 1767 Thomas Ryan, / 1791
 1769 Richard Rodda
 1771 John Roberts, * 1788
 1772 Thos. Rutherford, * 1806
 1772 James Rogers, * 1807
 1773 George Roberts, / 1774
 1773 Samuel Randel, / 1784
 1774 Jasper Robinson, * 1798
 1774 Henry Robins, / 1784
 1775 & William Roots, / 1776
 1780 Thos. Readshaw, / 1783
 1783 James Renwick
 1785 John Ramshaw, # 1795
 1785 James Ridel
 1786 John Reynolds
 1786 Thomas Roberts
 1787 Richard Reece
 1788 John Riles
 1788 Thomas Rogerson
 1789 Thomas Ridgeway
 1790 Thomas Robinson, * 1793

S.

1766 John Standring, * 1771
 1767 John Smith, * 1773
 1768 George Shadford
 1768 Hugh Sanderson, # 1777
 1768 Richard Seed, * 1805
 1769 George Snowden
 1769 Samuel Smith, / 1782
 1770 Edward Slater, / 1776
 1770 Robert Swan, * 1810
 1772 William Severn, / 1778
 1773 George Shorter, * 1779
 1774 Edward Sweeny, / 1775
 1774 Francis Smith, / 1775
 1775 Joseph Sanderson, / 1800

1776 James Skinner, / 1782
 1777 // Edward Smyth, / 1784
 1777 Isaac Shearing, * 1778
 1777 William Sanders
 177 9 Alexander Suter
 1779 William Simpson, * 1804
 1780 Thomas Shaw, / 1793
 1782 Robert Scott, / 1790
 1784 Vince Sellar, / 1785
 1785 John Smith
 1786 Joseph Sutcliffe
 1786 Thomas Smith, / 1788
 1786 Thomas Seward, * 1787
 1786 William Stephens
 1787 John Stamp
 1787 John Standoe, * 1810
 1787 John Sanders, / 1788
 1788 John Stephens, * 1789
 1788 John Stephenson
 1788 Matthew Stewart
 1788 Robert Smith, * 1801
 1788 Robert Smith
 1788 Wm. Sanderson, * 1810
 1788 Wm. Stephenson, # 1796
 1789 William Shelmerdine
 1789 William Sanders
 1789 John Sanderson, * 1802
 1789 Robert Smith, jun.
 1789 William Smith
 1790 George Sargent
 1790 George Skeritt
 1790 George Sykes
 1790 John Simpson
 1790 Samuel Steel
 1790 Thomas Simonite

T.

1770 Thomas Tennant, * 1793
 1771 Thomas Tatton, / 1778
 1774 William Tunney, / 1781
 1774 William Thom, / 1797
 1777 Joseph Taylor
 1781 Thomas Tattershall
 1782 James Thom, # 1812
 1785 William Thoresby, * 1806
 1786 John Townsend
 1786 John Tregortha, / 1790
 1786 Richard Thoresby, / 1787

1787 Francis Truscott
 1788 Charles Tunnycliffe
 1788 Henry Taylor, / 1798
 1789 Jon. Thompson, * 1790
 1790 Samuel Taylor
 1790 Thos. Tretheway, * 1812

U.

1770 John Underhill, / 1777

V.

1775 John Valton, * 1794
 1775 Thomas Vasey
 1785 Thomas Vernon, / 1791

W.

1766 Thos. Webb, *L 1796
 1767 John Wittam
 1768 Christ. Watkins, * 1805
 1768 Francis Wolfe, / 1782
 1761 Thomas Wride, * 1807
 1769 Francis Wrigley
 1769 Rich. Whatcoat, * 1806
 1769 Robert Wilkinson, * 1781
 1769 Samuel Wells, * 1780
 1769 Wm. Whitaker, * 1794
 1770 Geo. Wadsworth, * 1797
 1770 James Watson
 1770 Richard Wright, / 1777
 1770 Robert Williams, * 1775
 1771 John Watson, / 1785
 1772 John Watson, jun.
 1773 James Wood
 1773 John Wilshaw
 1774 John Whiteley, / 1779
 1776 Rich. Watkinson, * 1793
 1778 Nathaniel Ward, / 1785
 1778 Thomas Warwick, * 1809
 1779 George Waane, * 1781
 1779 John Walker, / 1782
 1779 William Warrenner
 1780 William West
 1781 James Wray, * 1793
 1782 James Walker, / 1784
 1784 James Wilson, / 1787
 1785 George Whitfield, / 1805

1785 Peter Walker, / 1788	1788 William Wilson, * 1808
1786 James Williams, / 1787	1789 Samuel Wood
1787 Johh Woodrow	1789 Thomas Werrill, * 1792
1787 John West, / 1790	1790 Thomas Whitehead, /1793
1787 Thomas Wood	
1788 Jasper Winscombe, / 1792	Y.
1788 Mark Willes, * 1795	
1788 Thomas Wymont, / 1791	1779 Zechariah Yewdall

These names added together make 470;³ some of them acted but a very short time in a public character among the Methodists. But, compared with the former period of twenty-five years, the increase of Preachers, and consequently of people, was very great; especially when it is considered, that I have not noticed those who were raised up in the United States Of America, where Methodism had been established since the year 1769. Of these Preachers it may be remarked: 1. They loved study; they improved themselves in various branches of learning: hence, their knowledge was more extensive than their predecessors. 2. As the people increased, the Circuits were contracted, the Preachers studied economy, and were more at home with their families. 3. As they did not travel so much, nor remove, in general, oftener than once in two years from one Circuit to another, they became more known to the people at large, and less persecuted.

³ Actually there are 472 preachers in Myles' list.

APPENDIX B

Below is a list of the sixty-six lives included in this study. Bibliography E records the books in which these accounts may be found. Those names marked with an asterisk (*) also appear in the Dictionary Of National Biography.

Adams, William	Mather, Alexander
Allen John	Mitchell, Thomas
Ashman, William	Moss, Richard
Atlay, John	Murlin, John*
Black, William	Myles, William
Brettal, John	Nelson, John*
Brown, George	Oliver, John
Cownley, Joseph	Olivers, Thomas*
Dillon, John	Pawson, John
Foster, Henry	Pawson, Marma duke
Furz, John	Payne, Thomas
Gordon, David	Peacock, Christopher
Green, William	Prickard, John
Haime, John	Pritchard, John
Hall, James	Rankin, Thomas*
Hanby, Thomas	Rhodes, Benjamin
Hanson, Thomas	Roberts, Robert
Harris, Howell*	Robinson, Jasper
Hodgson, Samuel	Rodda, Richard
Hopper, Christopher	Rogers, James
Hunter, William	Shadford, George
Jaco, Peter	Staniforth, Sampson
Jones, Joseph	Stephens, John
Joyce, Matthias	Story, George
Kershaw, John	Taylor, Thomas*
Lee, Thomas	Tennant, Thomas
Lowes, Matthew	Told, Silas
Lumb, Matthew	Valton, John
M'Cornock, William	Walsh, Thomas
M'Nab, Alexander	Whatcoat, Richard
Manners, Nicholas	Wilkinson, Robert
Maskew, Jonathan	Wright, Duncan
Mason, John	Yewdall, Zechariah

APPENDIX C

AN ANALYSIS CHART OF MYLES' "LISTS"

	"First Race" 1740-1765	"Second Race" 1766-1791	Totals
Preachers	218 *	472	690
Travelling Preach.	193	460	653
Local Preachers	13	3	16
Clergymen	12	9	21
Ordained later	16	9	25
Departed from work			
Travelling P.	107	145	252
Local P.	1	0	1
Clergy	6	5	11
Died in the work			
Travelling P.	79	300	379
Local P.	12	3	15
Clergy	6	4	10
Expelled			
Travelling P.	7	15	22
L			
Local P.	0	0	0
Clergy	0	0	0

* Excluding John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield.

APPENDIX D

The following published works written by the first generation of travelling preachers do not appear in Osborn's Outlines Of Wesleyan Bibliography. These volumes have been found principally in the Methodist Book Room, Didsbury College Library, and the British Museum in the course of this study.

Cennick, John, An Account Of The Conversion Of Edward Lee, A Malefactor who Was Executed At Haveford-West. . . For A Robbery. London: M. Lewis, 1756. 22 pp.

_____, The Assurance Of Faith; Or, The Experience Of A True Christian. London: M. Lewis, 1756. 24 pp.

_____, The Beatific Vision; Or, Beholding Jesus Crucified. London: M. Lewis, 1756. 19 pp.

_____, The Beatitudes. London: M. Lewis, 1756. 24 pp.

_____, The Benefits Of The New Testament. London: M. Lewis, 1756. 16 pp.

_____, The Daemoniac. London: M. Lewis, 1756. 19 pp.

_____, The Danger Of Infidelity; or, The Necessity Of A Living Faith In Christ. London: John Hart, 1753. 20 pp.

_____, Deliverance From Death. London: M. Lewis, 1756. 16 pp.

_____, Dives And Lazarus. London: M. Lewis, 1756. 16 pp.

_____, The Divinity Of Christ. London: John Hart, 1753. 20 pp.

_____, The Fall And Redemption. London: M. Lewis, 1756. 24 pp. (Second edition).

_____, The First Principles Of Christianity. London: M. Lewis, 1756. 36 pp. (Second edition).

_____, The Gift And Office Of The Holy Ghost. London: M. Lewis, 1756. 20 pp. (Second edition)

_____, The Good Shepherd. London: M. Lewis, 1756. 16 pp. (Second edition).

Cennick, John, The Great Sacrifice. London: M. Lewis, 1756.
18 pp. (Second edition).

_____, The Hidden Treasure. London: M. Lewis, 1756. 16 pp.
(Second edition).

_____, The Linsey-Woolsey Garment. London: M. Lewis, 1756.
21 pp.

_____, The Lost Sheep, Piece Of Silver, And Prodigal Son.
London: M. Lewis, 1756. 24 pp. (Second edition).

_____, Lot's Flight. London: John Hart, 1754. 20 pp.

_____, The New Birth. London: H. Trapp, 1788. 15 pp.
(Fifth edition).

_____, Nunc Dimittis. Some Lines Of The Rev. Mr. Cennick's
. . . Which He Wrote Some Time Ago, And Carried With Him
In His Pocket book Where They Were Found After His Decease.
London: M. Lewis, 1756. 7 pp.

_____, The Offices Of The Messiah. London: M. Lewis, 1756.
20 pp.

_____, The Pattern Of Mercy. London: M. Lewis, 1756. 24 pp.
(Second edition).

_____, The Privilege Of Believers. London: M. Lewis, 1756.
16 pp. (Second edition).

_____, The Reproach Of The Cross. London: M. Lewis, 1756.
18 pp.

_____, The Safety Of A True Christian. London: M. Lewis,
1756. 18 pp.

_____, The Sower. London: M. Lewis, 1756. 23 pp. (Second
edition).

_____, The Shadows Of Christ. London: M. Lewis, 1756.
28 pp. (Second edition).

_____, A Short Catechism, Chiefly Designed For The Instruction
Of Little Children In The Doctrines Of Jesus Christ.
London: Printed for the Author. 51 pp. 1744.

_____, Simon And Mary. London: M. Lewis, 1759. 23 pp.
(Second edition).

Cennick, John, St. Paul's Conversion. London: M. Lewis, 1760
16 pp. (Third edition).

_____, The Sufferings And Satisfaction Of Christ. London:
J. Hart, 1753. 28 pp.

_____, Thy Syrophenician: Or, A Pattern Of Invincible Faith. London: M. Lewis, 1759. 19 pp. (Second edition)

_____, A Treatise On The Holy Ghost: Wherein Is Proved, That The Spirit Of God Was In The Prophets And Apostles, And Is In Every True Believer, To The End Of The World. London: J. Lewis, 1742. 84 pp.

_____, Twenty Discourses On . . . Important Subjects, etc.
2 vols. London: M. Lewis, 1762.

_____, The Two Covenants. London: M. Lewis, 1756. 24 pp.
(Second edition).

_____, The Vision Of Dry Bones. London: M. Lewis, 1756.
20 pp. (Second edition).

_____, The Widow Of Nain. London: M. Lewis, 1756. 18 pp.

_____, The Woman Of Samaria. London: M. Lewis, 1756.
20 pp. (Second edition).

Cownley, Joseph, Letters Written In The Year MDCCXCII.
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: R. Grey, 34 pp.

Dillon, John, A Short Account Of Mr. John Dillon, Preacher Of The Gospel (By Himself). London: 1796. 11 pp.

Edwards, John, A Collection Of Hymns And Spiritual Songs.
Leeds: 1769. (Second edition with additions.)

_____, The Safe Retreat From Impending Judgment: Being The Substance Of A Sermon On Isa. LV 7. London: 1762.

_____, A Short Account Of The Experience Of The Work Of God And The Revealing Of Jesus Christ In The Heart Of John Edwards. London: W. Strahan, 1744. 104 pp. (Second edition).

_____, A Vindication Of The Protestant Doctrine Of Justification, And Of Its Preachers And Professors, From The Unjust Charge Of Antinomianism. Extracted From A Letter Of The Rev. Mr. Robert Trail... London: 1758. 48 pp.

Hampson, John, (translator) A. H. Niemeyer, Leben John Wesley & Geschichte der Methodisten. Halle: 1793.

Helton, John, The Insufficiency Of The Light Of Nature Exemplified In The Vices And Depravity Of The Heathen World. London: John and Arthur Arch, 1797. 85 pp.

Hitchens, James, A Short Account Of The Death Of Samuel Hitchens. London: 1746. 11 pp.

_____, A Short Account Of The Death Of Thomas Hitchens. London: 1747. 12 pp.

Hopper, Christopher, "A Sermon On Isaiah xlii. 12." Arminian Magazine, XVI, 1793, pp. 561-568; 627-236.

_____, "A Sermon On Isaiah li. 1" Arminian Magazine, XVII, 1794. pp. 567-575; 627-634.

Humphreys, Joseph, An Answer To Every Man That Asketh A Reason Of The Hope That Is In Us, By Way Of Question And Answer. London: M. Lewis and Son, 1767. 12 pp.

_____, An Account Of Joseph Humphreys' Experience Of The Work Of Grace Upon His Heart. Bristol: Felix Farley, 1742. 44pp.

_____, Atteb i Bob Dyn A Afynns Reswm Am y Gbaith Gydd Ynom. Hewn Ffordd O Holiad Ac Atteb. Mwythig: 1781. 15 pp.

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